

spare

no 36/30p

Rib

P.523/364

**Childbirth:
women's attitude to pain**

**Annie Kenney: Suffragette from Oldham
Women photograph men**

**Man's Union: women from jazz,
rock & classical join forces**

**How to take the abortion campaign
into your area**

NCCL Fights for Womens Rights

For two years, NCCL has been in the forefront of the campaign for women's rights.

Last year, we led the successful campaign to win for British women with foreign husbands the right to stay in this country. Together with the Abortion Law Reform Association, we set up 'A Woman's Right to Choose' — the campaign to defend and extend women's abortion rights.



I want to know more about NCCL's work for women's rights. Please send me details of the COLLECTIVE FUND.

Name:

Address:

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Please return to Rights for Women, National Council for Civil Liberties, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9DE.

NCCL's women's rights conference in February 1974 brought together over 500 women's liberationists and trades unionists. In November, we ran a special course for women's aid centres on the legal rights of battered women.

And that's not all. We have campaigned consistently inside and outside Parliament for an effective Anti Discrimination law, as well as for equal social security and pension rights for women.

We have advised hundreds of women on their legal rights. And we publish practical guides to the laws affecting women.

WE WANT TO DO MORE

Now we want to make sure that women know what their rights are and how to get them. We plan to run workshop courses to equip women with the practical knowledge to take cases to courts and tribunals. To publish regular law reports on women's rights cases. To continue our Parliamentary lobbying. To take test cases under the Anti Discrimination and Equal Pay laws.

To do this we need money.

That's why we're launching the COLLECTIVE FUND.

The COLLECTIVE FUND is a very simple idea. If *you* collect small sums of money, regularly, for women's rights; and if at least 500 other women do the same . . . then the total will finance NCCL's new unit, RIGHTS FOR WOMEN.

We believe there are thousands of women who would be willing to help the fight for women's rights by joining the COLLECTIVE FUND. Will you?

A little from a lot of people goes a long way

pcl

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Gotobed

Dear Spare Rib,
In view of the article entitled "Why is your magazine so depressing?" I feel I should point out that you do provide light relief — albeit accidentally. We were very amused to notice the credit under the photograph accompanying the article on prostitution in the same issue (no. 34). Was the man's name really Gotobed?
Yours sincerely,
Diane U. Chew
Baslow Road
Bakewell, Derbyshire

Yes, it is.

Liverpool Women's Aid

Dear Spare Rib,
What a pity the authors of the article on Women's Refuges in your April issue did not check their facts. If the misrepresentation of the situation in the Liverpool Women and Children's Aid Centre is anything to go by, what price the rest of the article!

You say we opened three weeks before Christmas. Wrong. We opened in November 1973.

You say we have completely separate flats with yale locks. Wrong. We have no flats and none of the rooms have yale locks, except a workroom in which we have sewing machines and material where the women make things.

You say marital care with a view to making the family stay together is common. Wrong again. Not one woman has gone back to her husband on advice from us. Many women do go back to their husbands and many many return to us again.

You say the hostel is very grim. Wrong. It is so cheerful that some people have accused us of making the house too "posh". You can't have it both ways.

A "warden"!!!! Right. Our first "battered wife" organised beds, bedding and food for new women when they first arrived in the house. She did the job voluntarily all day and every day for a year until we applied to Social Services for cash to pay her a salary. What's wrong with that?

We are not run by Social Services, but anyway we thought it was your aim to have all these facilities provided by volunteers? It seems to us that denigration of those who have made the effort and set up a house is simply counter-productive.

The only other correct fact in your article is that one of the two Trustees is a woman

magistrate. Presumably, if the magistracy was purely a male preserve this would be one of the areas in which you would be demanding equality?

You might have had the courtesy to come and see us before you published such a totally false picture.

Yours sincerely,
Ned Levy,
The other Trustee,
Pat Taylor
The Woman Magistrate,
Liverpool Women and
Children's Aid Centre

Five of us were involved in this article and we checked our information quite carefully. Lynne Segal, who was responsible for the section on Liverpool, received her information from a woman who said she was speaking for the Liverpool Women and Children's Aid Centre but who did not supply her name. We are sorry if the facts were inaccurate and that this particular paragraph was added too late for us to check again. We agree that adequate assistance should be provided by the Social Services, but emphasise that this should not be put in place of the safety and support found by women co-operating together.

Pot Boiler Fiction

Dear Spare Rib,
Please spare us the women's magazine stories. (I refer to Margaret Simpson's story: "The 'Till Next Time'" in Spare Rib no. 34). This is just pot boiler stuff. The moral may be different, but you can read this kind of thing in any women's magazine. Can't Spare Rib do better than that?
Yours sincerely,
Margaret Whitford
57 Arbury Road
Cambridge CB4 2JB

The moral is different and that's that's why you would not read this story in any other women's magazine. The story was important because the description of the relationship between the man and the woman revealed how, despite the woman's attempt to confront the man's domination, the inequality remained. His refusal to take her criticisms seriously, her emotional dependence on him, were shown to be the actual processes at work. The title itself emphasised that, as Margaret indicated in the last paragraph, although they both tried to conceal and delay it, they would inevitably have to face this contradiction.

Women's Liberation and Population Control

Dear Spare Rib,

As you attacked us in your editorial on population control (Spare Rib no. 33) we'd like to set the record straight. Like you, "we do not believe that population is the cause of the social ills of our society, nor that lowering population growth will, in itself, solve existing problems either here or in the Third World."

It seems that the author of your editorial has not done her background research, for we do NOT claim that population growth is the cause of our problems. We believe that it is an aggravant of the problems you cite — poverty, under-development, shortage of social services, food and resource depletion. These problems are too serious to draw up a list of priorities. All have to be attacked at once, but because of the scale of the problems individuals will inevitably concentrate on different areas.

As for Germaine Greer's article, I would like to challenge her assertion that there is a conflict between population control and feminism. She calls overpopulation a "fashionable conviction" which she implies results in "forcible abortion or compulsory sterilisation of women." By doing this, she is, to use her own words, assuming "a state of fictitious emergency." There are extremes — such as the abhorrent case of white doctors in the USA forcibly sterilising black teenagers — but these are as representative of the population movement as bra-burning is of the women's movement.

Having a rational population policy does not conflict with the principle of control over one's own body, which Germaine Greer calls "an integral and essential part of feminism." A population policy should be based on that essential freedom through free birth control and abortion on demand. But it must include information which relates the individual decision about family size to environmental conditions today and those in the foreseeable future.

I despair when feminism is used as a front for female

chauvinism — the Greer-given "right" of a woman to have as many children as SHE wants regardless of its effect on all other women, men, and children. I believe that every woman's decision must take into account the future children are likely to face.

There was a popular badge at the Population Conference in Bucharest — "My Body Belongs To Me." The problem is — what I do with my body effects everyone.

Yours,
Linda Starke
Director
Population Stabilisation
F2, 5 Riverdale Road
East Twickenham, Middx.

Our Birth Right for a Mess of Pottage?

At the time of the Population Day "Call to Action" campaign in May 1973, Population Stabilisation did put its name to a leaflet which gave population itself as the cause of housing shortage, overcrowded classrooms, high food prices, traffic jams etc. We welcome Population Stabilisation change of stance on this as we welcome their support for contraception and abortion on demand, but the comments below are an attempt to show why I do not think the policies they advocate will achieve the aims they desire.

Rational for Whom?

There is no relationship at present between controlling the numbers in the population and better control of our relationship to our "environment". Population Stabilisation might therefore persuade people to have fewer children and have no impact on the things that concern its members at all.

What determines our relationship to the environment (in its wider sense), is the form of the economy and the degree of democratic control over it.

Without democratic control of the economy (that is, of what will be produced and how and, therefore, of the man-power needs of the economy) all population control

represents the imposition of the "rational interest" of those who do in fact make decisions about the economy (employers, bureaucrats, politicians) on women (and men) whose interests are ignored. Control of the population cannot prevent the continued concentration of wealth and power in a few hands. It is for this reason that the Women's Movement opposes population control. "My body belongs to me" — the badge Linda Starke saw at Bucharest — is the simplest expression of women's individual interest.

What was World Population Year?

The Bucharest World Population Conference held in August 1974 was an attempt to impose the rational interest of the developed world on Third World Nations in the form of the American-sponsored World Population Plan of Action. The plan was rejected by a coalition of Third World nations because it would prevent them making their own decisions about how to organise their economies. (Many countries in the Third World, particularly in Africa, consider that they need more people in order to develop rather than less.)

But the Women's Movement does not see the rejection of population control as itself sufficient for the democratic control of those economies. Unlike the Catholic Church or the present rulers of Brazil it supports both Women's right to contraception and abortion facilities and her right to help determine the fate of the fruits of her labour.

Further reading about birth control politics:
Women's Report Vol. 2, Sept-Oct 1974 "The Economics of Population Control" 20 pence from 75 Albert Palace Mansions, Lurline Gardens, London SW11, also Vol. 3, Jan-Feb 1975, which has a whole lot of stuff on woman's right to choose.

Women's Liberation and Socialism Conference Papers Three, Sept 21-22 1974.

"Some thoughts on a woman's right to choose". 45 pence from Jill Lampert, 27 Lonsdale Road, Harborne, Birmingham 17.

Women's Liberation and Socialism Conference Papers Two, London Sept 1973.

"Fertility: Economics and Ideology" (Sold out, individual copies available from *Spare Rib* for 40 pence).



Buzz Goodbody, holding the giant deodorant, introduces her 'daughter' to femininity in the women's street play 'Sugar and Spice', March 1971.

Sally Fraser

for Buzz-news items in the paper on April 18th —

So the report concludes these women were in much distress did suffer and were most unhappy women poets too can document peculiar pain attaching one warm day in spring to heads that push the earth both ways statistics pin you bleeding up against the wall men's eyes hands poems freeze your body bloom in earth your pain to one exquisite second's consciousness we will not execute your memory thus as minuet of grief nor weep in family allowances you sister you a grief specific we your sisters also share your halting struggle to be born
 Michele Roberts

The Death of Buzz Goodbody

On Saturday 12th April Buzz Goodbody was found dead at her home in Islington. She was 28. It's hard to face the fact that the possibilities, the contradictions, the light and shade of the life of a sister like Buzz have now, tragically, finished. One's left with only a memory to delineate, a handful of dry facts to state. Many know of her talents and her accomplishments as a director with the Royal Shakespeare Company, but it is in a different context I want to speak of Buzz, the context of Women's Liberation.

She was one of the founder members of the first Women's Street Theatre Group, which was set up in the winter of 1970. She was dedicated, like all of us, to taking women's political theatre to the places where women were — to demonstrations, streets, shopping centres and markets.

Buzz believed in working collectively. Like the rest of us, she acted, made props, tap-danced, wrote leaflets, laughed, suffered and shared her self doubts in collective script-writing sessions which often turned into consciousness-raising groups. She shared in the heady hours of the Women's March in 1971, when we burlesqued our way down Oxford Street to the tune of 'Keep Young and Beautiful', and performed our first play in Trafalgar Square.

Despite her individual success in the theatre world, Buzz was too clear-sighted to think that liberation could be achieved in an individual way, by her own, or any other woman's success, and so she put her talents and energies into the fight for the liberation of all women.

We shall remember her as a revolutionary, and a struggling, all too human sister. □

Allison Fell

SHORTLIST

Compiled by Jill Nicholls. Please send any information to Shortlist, Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS.

events

National Assembly of Women Seminar for representatives of European countries. Subject: "Can we mitigate and abolish discrimination against women?" At the New Ambassadors Hotel, London WC1. Contact NAW, 283 Grays Inn Rd., London WC1.

Troops Out Movement
Delegate conference on the British Labour Movement and Ireland. At the Collegiate Theatre, Gordon St., London WC1 on May 24, 10-5.30. Fee 75p for delegates or observers. Credentials from TOM, 103 Hammersmith Rd., London W14.

National Abortion Campaign
NAC is organising a demonstration against the Abortion (Amendment) Bill on June 21. It must be massive. Assemble at 2.30, Charing Cross Embankment. March at 3.30 to a rally in Hyde Park.

Wandsworth Women's Festival
At Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, London SW11 from June 27 to July 4. Includes a "Day of Celebration", June 28, with exhibitions by women artists living in Wandsworth. During the week there will be dancing by various groups (Asian, Greek); Stephanie Gilbert is running a handywoman workshop, and women's theatre, films, concerts, talks, etc., are planned. Contact Caroline Langridge, 45 Fernside Rd., London SW1 (01-673 5236).

Welsh Conference
Women's groups within Wales have had several conferences lately. The next is in Aberystwyth, at the Students Union, Laura Place, June 28/9 (from 2pm Saturday to 1pm Sunday). Accommodation and creche available. Anyone interested contact Dot Bagley, Murmury-Coed, 10 Penglais Terrace, Aberystwyth, Dyfed. Ideas for workshops welcome.

campaigns

Radical Alternatives to Prison
RAP has brought out a paper criticising the Working Paper of the Working Party on Vagrancy

and Street Offences (submitted March '75). "After three years of considering evidence relating to street offences, the Working Party has produced a report which leaves the situation almost entirely unchanged." RAP also criticises the membership of the working party - since all but one of the 13 members are either from the police or the Home Office, and only one is a woman, it could hardly conceive of a radically different approach outside the present legal/judicial system.

Copies and further information available from RAP, Eastbourne House, Bullards Place, London E2 (01-981 0041).

Abortion

The WACC newsletter is available from Bristol WACC, 11 Waverley Rd., Bristol 6 for 10p and postage (subscription 50p for 3 issues, including postage).

arts



The Wandering House Wife

This fifteenth century Swiss tapestry from the Burrell Collection of the Glasgow City Art Gallery is now on exhibition at the Ferens Art Gallery, Hull. It's one of a number of beautiful tapestries. They illustrate women sharing rural work with men: hunting rabbits with ferrets, gathering wood, haymaking or shepherding sheep. In the light of the varied work and responsibilities of a fifteenth century housewife, the interpretation in the catalogue of the tapestry called *The Wandering House Wife* sounds suspiciously subjective: "A satirical portrait of the over-active housewife who never gives herself (nor anyone else) a moment's relaxation. Her neurotic expression and the inscription, which has been tentatively translated as 'I have household goods enough, otherwise I would not be so important', seems to support this view of her." In whose eyes?
R.P.

projects

Battered Women

Cardiff Women's Aid Centre is a new project. A group of women in Cardiff have persuaded the council to provide a house. There will be one qualified social worker working full-time, but they also need volunteer help. Contact Cardiff Women's Action Group, c/o 108 Salisbury Rd., Cathays, Cardiff (Cardiff 28908).

Portugal: Three Marias

Maria Isabel Barreno, one of the three authors of *The New Portuguese Letters*, is coming to England in October for the publication of the book here. Any women's group wanting to organise a meeting at which she could speak should contact Georgina de Dennison at Victor Gollancz (01-836 2006).

Writing

Any woman interested in a weekend in the country sometime in May or June to discuss writing and maybe start a magazine for poems, stories, etc., contact Mary Scarlett, 1 Peter St., Lancaster.

services

La Leche League

Was founded by women who had breastfed their babies to help women who wanted to feed. There are now ten groups in England. Many have monthly discussion meetings; each has a library of books and leaflets on childbirth, breastfeeding, etc., and a "leader", who is always available to answer questions and provide encouragement. For more information about local groups contact La Leche League, 5 Rose Cottages, Station Rd., Bricket Wood, St. Albans, Herts.

Icebreakers

Is a collective of homosexual women and men who run a nightly telephone service for other gay people. London Icebreakers is on 01-274 9590 every evening 7.30-10.30. Bristol Icebreakers, 0272-55 6925, operates Monday to Friday 7.30-9.30.

The London group has just produced a leaflet explaining its position. "We are not concerned with cases or treatment, but with people and the exchange of ideas and feelings." "We are not a gay dating agency or 'marriage' bureau, nor can we offer lasting friendship to everyone who rings us." "We hope to replace the negative attitudes of callers toward their homosexuality with positive ones."

In February there were 22 men and 2 women in London Icebreakers! They say they want more women - contact Icebreakers, BM/Gay Lib, London WC1V6XX.

pamphlets

Battered Women and the Law
Inter-Action Advisory Service Handbook No.3; 30p. Inter-Action Advisory Service, a group specialising in advisory work for community action, worked with Chiswick Women's Aid 1972/3 and produced a

mimeographed booklet about the way the law protecting battering wives actually works. This has now been published commercially.

On the whole it is helpful and constructive. I got a non-legal friend of mine to read it, and she said it was clear. I liked the way the law was set out in clear steps, not represented as an amorphous mass. I would recommend anyone working with — or anywhere near — the problem to buy it.

As a lawyer interested in the accessibility of legal services to the public, I was particularly impressed with the critique of the availability of the law in this field.

From the technical point of view, I have a few criticisms — for example, it would be an unenterprising solicitor who, having had half a dozen sets of documents drafted by a barrister, wouldn't start drafting them herself. Also I have never thought much of the practice of filing a petition after the first hearing, as it tends to increase the amount of work you have to do. But apart from these minor and optional points, a very worthwhile booklet.

Ruth Holt
Paddington Law Centre

Women's Struggle Notes
Women in Big Flame are compiling information about women's struggles and producing these notes once every two months (the March/April edition is No.4).

They say, "What we are trying to do is *not just* find out about the struggles of working class women but learn from them, fight with them and help to generalise from them. We want to find out how struggles were won or lost, in

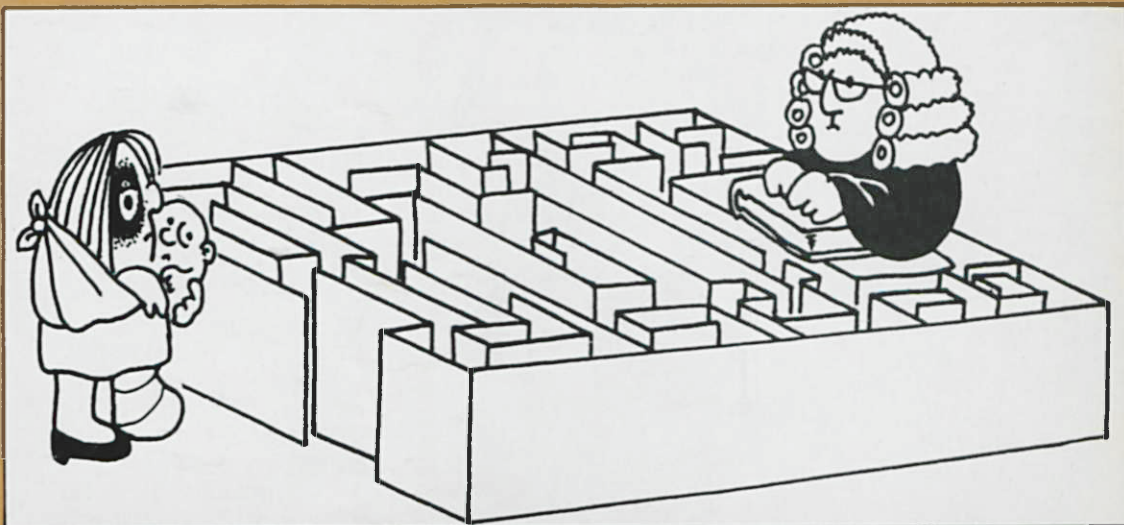
Fireweed

A quarterly of working class and socialist art. In the first issue, which came out in March, there were only three women contributors, and in the second, due out in June, there's only one. This is because only three women have sent material. The editors say

they'd love to receive more work from women. They will print stories, autobiography, plays, poems, songs (with music), drawings and photos that have a working class or socialist relevance.

Contributions to *Fireweed*, 107 Bowerham Rd., Lancaster (with sae). Send 65p for a

single copy or £2.50 for a year's subscription to The Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 14 Talacre Rd., London NW5 3PE. Subscribers will get a free copy of Arnold Wesker's new play *The Journalist*, which has been withdrawn from production pending a law suit.



order to be able to spread this experience so that there are more victories."

The notes are detailed and try to cover all areas of struggle — at workplaces (factories, hospitals, offices), in claimants' unions, around food prices, nursery campaigns, housing and squatting, abortion.

At present the circulation is fairly limited — within Big Flame, to women with whom people in Big Flame are working, to other women's groups developing similar ideas and practice. Anyone else wanting to contribute to or receive *Struggle Notes*, contact West London Big Flame, at 13 Tadmor St., London W12. 6p an issue plus some postage.

Women and Health

Report of the first Women and Health conference held in Sheffield last October. Written for those who weren't there and for those who were, but obviously couldn't go to all the workshops. Not a self-help handbook but a jumbled collection of ideas, transcripts of workshops and copies of the papers that were handed out. Stuff on VD, the NHS, selfhelp, the pill and much more. Very well produced with lots of drawings and cartoons.

Available from WL Workshop, 38 Earlham St., London WC1 at 15p a copy plus 8p postage (also from Compendium and Rising Free in London and Grass Roots in Manchester). Bulk orders of 15 copies or more at 10p a copy and 15p

postage per 5 copies (eg 15 copies = £1.50 and 45p postage) from 8 Burngreave Bank, Sheffield 4; cheques payable to "Women and Health Report."

Male and Female

by Anne Jones, Jan Marsh and A.G. Watts
CRAC, Hobsons Press, Cambridge
Classbook 80p, teacher's book £1.

For all those teachers who have wondered how to discuss sex-stereotypes in the classroom, this cheerful booklet packed with cartoons is a welcome aid. It confronts male as well as female stereotyping and examines how it happens from babyhood onwards, covering school, home, work and marriage. Cross-cultural references and myth-shattering facts and figures make a thought-provoking package that will help to get girls and boys of secondary school age examining their notions of themselves and others.

Male and Female also suggests the repercussions of less rigid sex-stereotyping on marriage and on work in and outside the home. As the authors conclude "The choice you make about work and the kind of family life you'd like will affect your whole life." This booklet could help school-students work out what their options are and what they could be.

Rosemary Stones
Children's Rights Workshop

The Demand for Independence

This pamphlet has been produced by the group working for legal and financial independence. It describes the history and ideas of the demand, gives a detailed account of the way the various state departments (eg Inland Revenue, DHSS) enforce women's position of dependence, and includes information about proposed future legislation. The group hopes women will campaign locally and join in national action. The pamphlet could provide a basis for discussion and planning. Costs 10p or more (plus postage) from 7 Killieser Ave., London SW2 (01-671 2779).



CHILDBIRTH

By Valerie Charlton and Annette Muir



Should childbirth take place at home or in a hospital? What does labour in childbirth feel like? Is labour painful? What is pain? Why do doctors treat childbirth as just another operation? What is the medical profession's attitude to pregnant women?

Childbirth is in the news again. Almost every day there is an article in a magazine or newspaper on the latest developments. There was even a television programme ('Horizon') which graphically brought childbirth into the living room, scandalising us with the dangers of pain-killing drugs and induced births. A number of letters have been sent to *Spare Rib* from which we shall include points.

Medical opinion is divided about the advantages of certain drugs and 'aids' to labour. The research seems scanty and inconclusive. At the same time, the women's movement has given many women the confidence to question authority and the wish to make informed decisions for themselves. There are women who have had bad experiences in childbirth and rightly begin to look at ways in which the hospitals may have contributed towards this. Others, however, would go further and argue that births should take place at home. We want to look at these issues more closely.

When women talk about their childbirth experiences, the most noticeable fact is the wide variety of experiences they have had. They range from the fortunate woman who feels discomfort and some slight pain to the woman who is shattered and shocked by the birth. It would be useful if we could say that one particular characteristic of the hospital or the woman, for example, fear, made this difference — but clearly there is no such simple answer.

If we are going to talk about childbirth the question of pain is central. We must talk about pain. Many of us contribute towards a conspiracy of silence, partly because we think we may alarm expectant mothers thus creating the anxiety which will make pain inevitable. This silence is no way to get the problem of pain in childbirth examined and a frank approach is long overdue. Quotes from two letters sent to *Spare Rib* show how pain can dominate the memory of giving birth.

"The pain I suffered when I had my two children was so terrible that I suffered nightmares for ages afterwards and even now, whenever I read or hear anything on this subject, I get terribly depressed." Frances Sinfield

"I didn't realise just how unbearable the pain was compared with other pains, until the day before my last baby was born. I had an accident where I spilled scalding hot liquid all down me. Yet, while suffering labour pains next day, I thought, 'Goodness, the pain of having scalding hot water poured over you is nothing compared with this'." C.D. Haines

Contrast this with another statement:

"Whatever the discomfort may be, do remember that it will never be allowed to become unbearable." From *You and Your Baby* (Part 1), the British Medical Association Handout to all pregnant women.

Different Experiences

In the absence of any survey of women's experiences in childbirth, we talked to some women we knew.

Sue

Sue had her baby in a large teaching hospital and, after attending ante-natal classes, was fairly familiar with the wards. At the classes she had been asked if she wanted an epidural anaesthetic. This is an injection into the spine which blocks off all sensation below the injection. During labour she had a medical student with her all the time. It was a short labour for a first baby, four hours, and at no time was the pain unbearable, although in fact she did not have the epidural as there was not enough time. She was given an episiotomy, a small cut in the pelvic floor given during the last stage of labour, but did not have too much discomfort. Her whole experience was happy.

Mary

Mary had a "grim" first childbirth lasting 12 hours. The second was very quick, two hours, because she took castor oil. This can be a very dangerous thing to do. With her third child she was in labour for 16 hours, starting in heavy labour at 9 a.m. After seven hours she was given the epidural which she had asked for repeatedly during her ante-natal visits to the hospital.

"I was numb from the midriff to the ankles. I let them know as soon as I felt it wearing off even slightly. I didn't wait for any pain. It was topped up three times at two hourly intervals. I was sick every time but that wasn't too bad. They had to send for the anaesthetist each time and I was worried in case they'd take too

long to get back as they had five caesarians that evening. The contractions were monitored on a machine but I was also able to judge when to push, there was just enough sensation. When it was time to push, I only pushed twice and the baby came out. The labour was very long because the baby, although head first, was facing the wrong way.

"Although I had no pain I had nightmares for several nights afterwards."

Mary was in a large London teaching hospital and had no complaints about the way she was treated. She said the doctor at the delivery spent half an hour talking to her afterwards.

Mary-Ann

Mary-Ann attended classes run by the National Childbirth Trust which teach psychoprophylaxis, the breathing and muscular exercises intended to help one keep control of one's body during labour.

"It turned out that I had a very difficult labour, ending in a caesarian. (This is an operation where an opening is made into the womb through the wall of the abdomen.) Despite my preparation and confidence I found it an ordeal and was quite shattered. I welcomed the caesarian at the time because it meant an end to the ordeal but, in retrospect, I'm very disappointed that I didn't give birth to the baby normally."

Jane

Jane had taken the psychoprophylactic preparation for childbirth very seriously during a pleasant and relaxed pregnancy. She was in control during the first stage of labour but then the contractions weakened and a forceps delivery was necessary. Forceps are metal instruments about the size of a hand. With these the baby is pulled along the birth canal.

"I was first given an injection which felt as if it was being given from the inside. I felt it scrape against the bone and this was incredibly painful. I had an episiotomy which wasn't painful but as the forceps were put in I felt as if my bones were being pushed apart. The pain from there on until the baby was born was beyond description."

We think it is important to take women's subjective experience very seriously. All too often doctors are dismissive of the woman's assessment of her own pain.

Natural Childbirth and Psychoprophylaxis

There is a school of thought which assumes that pain in childbirth is related to the attitude of the woman and is therefore controllable by her. This is the root of the natural childbirth theory as expounded by Dr Grantley Dick Read. He thought that childbirth should be painless because it was a "natural" function and he saw relaxation as the answer. But it worked for only a very small number of women.

Psychoprophylaxis, which we have already mentioned, is another method of preparation for childbirth but one which maintains that relaxation is not enough and advocates the learning of neuromuscular disassociation, which means keeping most of the muscles at rest while some are working. This is complemented by a series of controlled breathing exercises.

In neither method is "pain" referred to as anything but that which is caused by resistance to the "natural" function of childbirth on the part of the woman, be it due to ignorance or fear. The psychoprophylactic method as described in Erna Wright's book *The New Childbirth* is supported by a comprehensive description of the childbirth process thereby attempting to remove the ignorance. But, to remove the fear, it relies heavily on the suggestion that pain will be minimised if not removed by careful following of the method.

Unfortunately, many women experience a degree of pain during even normal childbirth which is beyond relief by neuromuscular control or relaxation. The most disillusioned women we spoke to, and this in no way pretends to be a survey, were those for whom these methods had failed.

Phenomenon of Pain

As we have repeatedly referred to pain we thought it necessary to look more closely at the nature of pain. It is a little understood phenomenon in spite of a great deal of research. We talk of people having different pain thresholds, assuming people to be physiologically different in this respect. Ronald Melzack in the *Puzzle of Pain* says that there is now evidence that all people, regardless of cultural background, have a uniform sensation threshold. This, however, only holds true in precisely controlled



laboratory experiments in which all environmental conditions are kept constant. Once outside this situation the experience of pain can be affected by numerous other factors. These would include past experience of pain and this was demonstrated experimentally by Melzack and Scott (1957) who raised Scottish terriers in isolation cages so that they were deprived of all normal environmental stimuli, including the bodily knocks and scrapes that young animals get in the course of growing up. They were surprised to find that these dogs, at maturity, failed to respond normally to "pain" to the extent that when shown a flaming match some dogs poked their noses into the match, withdrew reflexively, but then repeatedly sniffed a match, while others made no effort to get away when experimentors touched their noses with the flame. These dogs also endured pain pricks with little or no evidence of pain.

The meaning of a situation can also be a powerful factor influencing the perception of pain. For example, soldiers in the First World War with extensive battle wounds denied having pain while soldiers with comparable surgical wounds were in agony. It was concluded that the soldiers with battle wounds were so relieved to be alive and off the battle field that the perception of pain was minimised.

Similarly, an overpowering involvement in something else can distract from pain just as the mere anticipation of pain is sufficient to raise the level of anxiety and thereby the intensity of perceived pain. Another influential factor in the perception of pain is suggestion, and hypnosis is the most extreme form of suggestion. A very small percentage of people can be hypnotised deeply enough to undergo major surgery entirely without anaesthesia. Studies into the effectiveness of placebos (pills or injections of neutral substances which the patient believes will have a particular effect) showed that about 35% of patients reported a marked relief in pain when they believed they had been given a painkiller.

All this illustrates vividly the extent to which pain is a highly personal, variable experience, influenced by cultural learning, the meaning of the situation, suggestion, etc. (It is also a highly complex physiological process.) However, whereas it is one thing to observe the complexity and power of these factors on pain perception, it is quite another to attempt to *control* pain by intervening at a psychological level only, especially when we don't even know how the central nervous system functions to permit such powerful psychological/cognitive control over bodily sensations of pain. There are simpler societies where suggestion may be more reliably used because it is supported by the whole culture and possibly religion. But we are the products of a diverse, fragmented and contradictory society and there is no way of knowing what forms of suggestion will work for each individual. But the preparation for childbirth methods which we described earlier are based on a notion that we can control pain in childbirth at a psychological level precisely because they assume the pain to be psychological in origin. This is particularly insidious for a woman because it puts the responsibility for pain squarely on her psyche.

Confusion may lie in assuming a function for pain rather than a cause.

"The National Childbirth Trust believes that pain is valuable to a woman who knows what it is for and is prepared to accept it." "The Vital First Hours" by Louis and Oliver Gillie, *Sunday Times*, 24 October 1974.

But what is it for? In a straightforward childbirth, pain fulfils no apparent purpose as it is not necessarily a warning of malfunction. Yet if we think of what is happening physiologically during childbirth it is not too hard to see why it is often a very painful process, be it "natural" or not. It is indicative of the depth of sexism in our ideology, regarding motherhood, that so

much confusion surrounds the question of pain in childbirth. Would the National Childbirth Trust say, for instance, that pain is valuable to a man with a broken leg if he knows what it is for and is prepared to accept it?

We must accept that, for the majority of women, childbirth is a physiologically painful process and that there is no virtue in suffering pain. Indeed, many women develop severe problems from having intensely painful experiences. Frances Sinfield, in her letter to *Spare Rib*, suggests that "shock" after childbirth may be one of the main causes of post natal depression.

Pain Killers

With this in mind we now want to look at what drugs are available to most women who have their babies in hospital. There are two most commonly used painkillers firstly, inhalation gas, of which there are three types. These will cut down sensory awareness but not usually produce unconsciousness. And secondly, Pethidine or Pethiliform which are injected and take about 20 minutes to become effective. Complaints about these vary widely. Some women were given them against their will and others were not given them when they were needed. The most important fact is that, according to a study by the Royal Post Graduate Medical School in London, pain relief with Pethidine was only satisfactory for one in four women: there are women who enjoy these drugs and get quite high while others become confused and frightened and can hallucinate. So we cannot regard this as an answer to pain in childbirth.

The other method of anaesthesia which is becoming more widely available is the "epidural block" which we have mentioned already. This completely numbs the lower part of the body and can produce a painless childbirth while the woman remains conscious. This is not yet offered in all hospitals because it requires the attendance of an anaesthetist. All the women we spoke to who had had epidurals were entirely satisfied with the result and it works for 90% of women. Sometimes, though, it may mean that a forceps delivery is necessary as the woman might not know when to push due to the reduced sensation.

Disadvantages of Aids to Labour

The disadvantages of all these drugs according to some members of the medical profession is that they can enter the baby through the placenta and may make it sleepy and slow to suck. It is also suggested that this can jeopardise the relationship between mother and child. When the effects of the drug are by no means proved and the research is not totally convincing, we find these suggestions undermining and guilt-provoking for women who are being made to feel that relief of pain can only be at the cost of harming their baby. The long-term effects on a woman of a painful delivery could be far more important than a temporarily sleepy baby and it is far more likely, if this is the defining factor, that a woman who has had a painless delivery will have a good relationship with her child.

Another controversial issue is that of induction. For many years now births have been induced for medical reasons. The methods most frequently used are the rupturing of the membranes (breaking the bag surrounding the baby) or the introduction of a hormone into the vein of the arm or hand by a drip over a period of hours. The snag is that the amount of hormone varies greatly from woman to woman and in any case is greatly in excess of that occurring naturally in the body during labour. If too much hormone is given the resultant labour may be very rapid and the contractions more painful. Obviously rupturing the membranes is preferable to the introduction of a hormone into the body, but it does not always start labour, hence the need for other methods.

More recently, some hospitals have started to induce labour for the convenience of the hospital and this practice has been widely attacked in newspapers and on television. If left to themselves the majority of babies are born at night, which is when hospital staff is most difficult to get and doctors often have to be woken up. Shortage of night staff can lead to the unfortunate situation of a woman being left on her own during labour.

As far as we could gather no hospital induced births for its own convenience against the will of the woman, although it must be said that for many women a suggestion from a doctor would be regarded as an order. The arguments in favour of convenience induction were put quite clearly by one woman we talked to. She wanted her husband to be present at the birth and there were only two dates when he could be off work, so she decided on

which of these days she would have her baby. She also preferred a time when the hospital was less busy so that she could be assured to the best available attention.

Problems in Hospitals

Other aspects of a hospital confinement that worry some women arise from insensitivity or an unquestioning attitude to tradition on the part of the hospital staff. Some common complaints are that women are left alone and frightened during their labour, that the hospital staff fail to communicate with them, that they were given drugs against their will, that they were given no anaesthetic and were treated clumsily while being stitched up after an episiotomy. These criticisms must be taken very seriously by those who work in hospitals though low pay and consequent staff shortages put many doctors, nurses and hospital workers under unreasonable stress. Hospitals, like all the institutions in our society, reflect the patriarchal and class structure. Nowhere could this be clearer than in the rigid hierarchy of the National Health Service. Inevitably, in this situation women, especially working class women, will be prey to sexist and class attitudes.

Back to Home Confinements?

In response to these difficulties in hospitals some people are now suggesting a return to home confinements, thus reversing a trend to hospital confinements.

"The whole process of childbirth today has been taken away from the women who actually bear the children into the clinical world of male obstetricians, and it is getting progressively harder for a normal, healthy woman to experience a normal, healthy childbirth." Christine Beales to *Spare Rib*.

"For the 80 to 90% of women whose pregnancy is normal, the experience of childbirth could be a much more natural one. Obstetrics has never been very much interested in normal childbirth - which has always been left to the midwives - but has concentrated on the pathological. The result is that by degrees normal childbirth in hospital has become pathological." "The Vital First Hours" by Louise and Oliver Gillie, *Sunday Times*, 24 October 1974.

These two statements indicate the thinking behind the movement towards more home confinements. What is most worrying however is the assumption that a "normal" birth can be predicted. This is certainly not the case. A birth can only be described as "normal" after the event. The following description of an intended home confinement shows what can happen.

Ann

Ann had made all the arrangements for a home confinement for her first baby, but because she had a haemorrhage, she was taken into hospital as an emergency case. The bleeding was caused by the placenta partially covering the entrance to the womb. Had it been a total covering, a caesarian section would have been necessary. There was no way of predicting this during what had been a normal, healthy pregnancy. She was discharged from an overcrowded hospital 12 hours after the induced birth, to the care of the midwife whom the hospital had failed to notify and who could not be contacted until the next day.

"It was then the panic set in. I felt desolate and totally unsupported. I had no idea what to do with this tiny baby. I hadn't even tried to feed him. Eventually the midwife did come, but never at the time she said because she was needed at other deliveries. Although she was very good when she did come, she was just too busy."

At that time in that city no woman under 30 could have her baby in hospital unless complications were expected.

Sometimes proponents of home confinements say that dominantly midwives, free of the atmosphere of the hospital, will be more sympathetic. But:

"I was determined to have my second baby at home. However, the midwife treated me terribly. She forgot the gas and air (until the last ten minutes). She forgot the pills and injections I was supposed to have and was only able to give me one injection. She told me afterwards I wouldn't have found it so bad if she'd been able to give me another injection towards the end. She left me when I was about to give birth to go and collect the gas and air from her house a few miles away. I was holding back waiting for her to return, which of course made the pain worse. She herself administered the gas and air in the last ten minutes. She kept pressing it over my face so making it difficult for me to push and

so relieve the pain." Letter to *Spare Rib*.

The Question of Choice

This whole area of discussion touches on the difficult question of freedom of choice as it is organised that we should be able to choose between a hospital or home confinement. But when we demand freedom of choice we have to remember we live in a class society and that freedom of choice for one individual may limit the choice of others.

In practice, when we demand the right to home confinements, what assumptions are we making? (Incidentally, we could also discuss the right to a hospital confinement that is denied to women in some parts of the country.) We are assuming adequate home conditions, someone to help the mother, sufficient midwives and a back-up emergency service. The first two conditions are far more likely to be satisfied by those women with higher incomes. As in similar situations in education, when a service is used more by vocal, better-off people, that service is improved at the expense of others. It is necessary to improve the conditions for *all* women. Home confinements may be preferable to confident, leisured women, but we cannot improve facilities generally without medical technology and for this we need hospitals.

There is an element of back-to-nature and away from medical technology about the arguments for home confinements. But in societies with few hospitals and little medical care, childbirth remains a hazardous business. Undoubtedly, hospitals with all their faults are the safest places in which to give birth. For this reason we think we should press for improvements in hospitals rather than support a move towards more home confinements.

Ideology in Pregnancy

If hospitals fail to reach our needs, the reasons are political, and the lack of development of satisfactory medical technology for women in childbirth is an indication of the power of the sexist ideology which dominates this whole area, completely exposing the way society *really* views impending motherhood. The following quotes are taken from the British Medical Association hand-out *You and Your Baby* and the leaflet for *Expectant Fathers* by the National Childbirth Trust.



You and your Baby's view of motherhood

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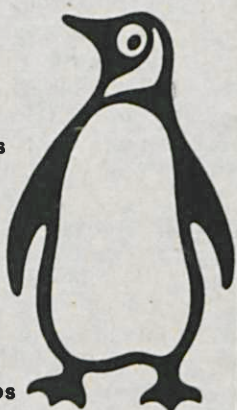
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"Of course she will think of clothes and what woman
wouldn't..."

"A woman should continue to take meticulous care of her
appearance during pregnancy, this is a wonderful time in a
woman's life and a happy woman is a beautiful woman. Con-
versely in the first few months she may feel off colour, but at
such a time carefully applied make up and a new hairdo proves
a tremendous morale booster, and the end result is appreciated
more than a little by the father to be." B.M.A.

"Try to keep your feet as smart looking as possible for a
woman's appearance counts from the feet upward as much as
from the head downwards." B.M.A.

"One of the earliest signs of pregnancy, particularly in a girl
who is having her first baby, is that her breasts change in
appearance in a subtle and beautiful way." B.M.A.

(For expectant fathers:)

"A woman is inclined to link the big moments in her life with
clothes so when she is going to have a baby her thoughts run on
'little garments'... Your wife may well be attracted by a pram
that either looks like her neighbour's or is the exact opposite (!)
depending on whether she is an individualist or the reverse; it
will be up to you to see that the brakes work and the handle is
the right height for easy pushing. Don't forget that you may want
to take your child out yourself sometimes!

"Caring for a baby may have little in common with a manu-
facturing process but your wife's gratitude will repay you if you
simplify feeding, bathing and cleaning routines with intelligent
application of a little time and motion study." N.C.T.

It is extraordinary that such generalisations are actually made
about the way *all* women feel. Not only are women seen as
frivolous creatures whose thoughts turn to clothes at the drop of
a hat, but also as half-witted idiots. How can the nation trust the
rearing of its children to such incompetents?

Diversion onto clothes and appearance has many effects. It
distracts from fear and anxiety. It helps to make women see them-
selves as passive objects thereby ensuring their powerlessness and
also pregnancy, birth and childbirth provide a huge area of
commercial exploitation. As long as women can be lulled into
this "cotton wool" view of pregnancy and childbirth, the real
work necessary to make childbirth a truly safe and painless
experience need not be done and the doctors will go on wonder-
ing what on earth post natal depression is all about.

We are intelligent, thinking beings and our expression of pain
and distress must be taken seriously. This is a necessary condition
for the application of medical science to the problem of pain in
childbirth. The tendency to dismiss accounts of real pain as
exaggerations or the complaints of neurotic women is found not
only among the medical profession and those who have not had
children, but also among women fortunate enough to have had
an easy birth. There is an element, even among those who recog-
nise the existence of pain in childbirth, of believing that "women
should bring forth children in suffering" in the true Judaic-
Christian tradition, or alternatively, that one has to suffer for
anything worthwhile. We reject these attitudes totally and think
that it is the right of every woman to give birth painlessly.

What Must be Improved

Some complaints made by women arose out of this ideology but
others were caused by unsatisfactory physical conditions in
hospitals. In the main, these are caused by shortage of staff.
Better pay and working conditions for hospital staff will remedy
this and it is up to us to support the struggles that many hospital
workers are already involved in to this end. We need to recognise
that our interests coincide in many areas, for example the
National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) present campaigns
against paybeds in National Health hospitals.

We have covered some of the points usually raised by women
when they discuss their childbirth experiences and inevitably this
leads us to politics. At this time anything to do with the National
Health Service is intensely political. Whereas it is necessary to
criticise the NHS constructively, we must acknowledge that its
existence is fundamental to a civilised society. We have tried to
indicate practical areas of change but nothing can happen without
change in the way women are viewed by society as a whole, which
includes the way we view ourselves and each other. □

Who was Annie Kenney?

by Jill Liddington

Who was Annie Kenney? Everyone's heard of her and no-one really knows who she was. In Suffragette histories (except ones like Andrew Rosen's *Rise Up, Women*) she's monotonously introduced just as 'the Oldham mill girl'. Antonia Raeburn in *Militant Suffragettes* describes her as 'Annie Kenney, a cotton mill worker'; and even when Hannah Mitchell writes about her first meeting with Annie and her sister in *The Hard Way Up* it is merely as 'fine examples of the self-respecting Lancashire mill girl, intellectual and independent'.

The 'mill girl' stereotype sticks because it's difficult to find out much about her now. Annie would be ninety-five if she were alive now. The people who remember her early life in the Lancashire villages between Oldham and the Pennines get fewer and fewer and memories hazier and hazier.

But it's important to know more. After the Pankhursts, Annie was the most daring and influential of the Suffragettes. She was a powerful and persuasive speaker: if any area needed stirring up, Annie was always sent in to do her trick from the back of a 'lorry'. And, conveniently for the WSPU, her roots were uncompromisingly working class.

What had pushed twenty-six year old Annie to leave Oldham for London, and give up her mill work for agitation? What was her life like till then?

You don't learn much from her whimsical autobiography *Memories of a Militant*; and few people can remember back to the 1880's. We do know she came from a typically large, boisterous family – seven sisters and four brothers. Her mother was a seemingly faultless Victorian angel, and her jolly father, patriotically called

Horatio Nelson, was a boozier and pigeon-fancier, though he did occasionally put in an appearance at the Grotten Hollow spinning mill. The family moved around a lot between the various mill villages; by the time Annie was eighteen, she'd lived in at least five houses. The last was Whams House, Hey, a big and impressive building. Possibly the Kenney family was going up in the world. But since all the children had to start work at the earliest possible age, the move to Whams was more likely to accommodate the eternal pigeons, on which vital slices of the family budget were won and lost.

Annie, like millions of others, started work on her tenth birthday, in 1889. She put on her shawl and her clogs and trotted the half mile from home with her friend Alice Hurst, to work as a half-timer in Atherton's mill, Springhead. Henry Ather-

ton, who himself had started work as a 'little piecer' at Waterhead Mill in the 1820's, had built this mill for himself in 1855. It was a sprawling, stone-built mill on the banks of a tiny river, very different from the giant red-brick Lowry-like mills that came to dominate Annie's landscape when she was in her twenties. Her mill is still working, though it's changed its name to Woodend Mill; we live next door to it and the outside of the buildings must be just the same as when Annie arrived each morning.

Annie worked for three years as a half-timer, from 6am to 12.30pm, and then from her thirteenth birthday until she was twenty-six she worked full-time, from 6am to 5.30pm. But she doesn't say much about work during these sixteen years. She seemed to have a childlike ability to escape from the destructive monotony of the mill into fantasies and daydreams. "When I was fourteen I played with a doll just as naturally as children of seven play with their dolls. As soon as the factory was closed and I had finished my allotted work at home, I fled and a few of us played 'factory' for the rest of the evening, our fun consisting in telling the little ones what to do!"

Annie doesn't even bother to mention how much she earned. But we can imagine what a derisory amount it was, because we know her brother Rowland earned 6d a week as a part-time learner in the noisy, over-heated spinning room of the Springhead Spinning Company, and was only promoted to 10/6d when he went full-time.

And some of the women who still live around Woodend Mill can fill in the gaps. Mrs Jones, though she's thirty-five years younger than Annie, remembers that Annie worked in the card room, where the bales of raw cotton arrived before being spun and woven. "I heard my mother talk about her being on speeds in the card room" she said. "She had so many hanks of cotton to get through before it got coiled in a big can for spinning . . . My mother used to say how she was always agitating. I expect she'd stick her nose into everything, a bit like us."

Annie was interested in socialism long before she became interested in feminism. Her neighbourhood had a long tradition of both. The villages of Springhead, Lees, Hey, Shelderslow and Grotton were strung out between the cotton boom town of Oldham, and the tiny spinning and weaving hamlets on the Pennine slopes. The area was one of the first to experience the first tremors of the Industrial Revolution, and tended to be unionised earlier than most areas. Oldham had had its own 'riot' for the 'Eight hours and no more for Twelve hours pay' in 1834, with thirteen people arrested including one woman, Sally Whitehead. One of the first female reform societies met in a pub in Hey in 1809; and ten years later, a hundred and fifty female reformers from the area marched to Peterloo under a magnificent white silk banner.

By the 1880's and 1890's socialist ideas were everywhere. Even Annie Kenney was reading William Morris and Tom Paine. But if any one writer changed the lives of working people like Annie it was Robert Blatchford.

Blatchford and his tub-thumping writing

in *The Clarion* newspaper and in *Merrie England* made socialist ideas immediately accessible to everyone. 'For every convert made by *Das Capital*,' wrote one newspaper, 'there were a hundred made by *Merrie England*.' In fact, *Merrie England*, sold for a penny, was actually addressed to a 'John Smith of Oldham'. "You live in Oldham, and you are a spinner" pounded Blatchford. "If I ask you why you live in Oldham, and why you work in a factory, you will say you do it in order to get a living. I think also that you will agree with me on three points: firstly, that Oldham is not a nice place to live in; secondly, that the factory is not a nice place to work in; thirdly that you don't get as good a living as you desire."

All this went straight to the Kenney children's heart. Blatchford was their 'literary father and mother'. Rowland was led by Blatchford into the I.L.P. and into editing *The Daily Herald*. Blatchford's newspaper was the only paper Annie read; and, of course, she got involved in the Oldham Clarion Vocal Union and all the Clarionette social activities.

But Blatchford idealised women and had no time for feminism. In his novel *A Bohemian Girl* (1899) he satirises feminists stuck with names like Horatia Waffles, Valerie Wagchin and Bernadine Bloomer.

Annie's socialism came from Blatchford: but her feminism was a spell cast on her by the magnetic Pankhursts. Exactly how this happened isn't certain. Christabel and Annie both say that the first occasion was at a suffrage meeting in Oldham, when Annie was so impressed by Christabel that she promised to 'work up a meeting' for her among the factory women of Oldham and Lees. Annie's saintly mother had died a few months before, and in many ways Christabel must have arrived just at the right moment to play proxy mother to Annie. "I had faith in Christabel" she wrote. "It was exactly the faith of a child."

But Alice Hurst, Annie's childhood ally, tells a different story. They were both going back to the mill one day when they found a large crowd had gathered on some spare ground next to the Dog and Partridge, Springhead. Mrs Pankhurst and her two daughters were speaking from the back of a 'lorry'. Annie put searching questions to Mrs Pankhurst which so impressed her that she just said imperiously "I want that girl." So Annie was taken up and trained.

Whichever story is true, it was the Pankhurst charisma that did it. They changed her whole life. "The following week I lived on air . . ." she wrote. "For the first time in my life I experienced real loneliness. I instinctively felt a great change come over me. I was losing my old girl friends of the factory."

The Pankhursts saw an advantage in exploiting Annie's connections with factory girls. She lent a much-needed working class balance to WSPU platforms; and she used her experience in talking at Wakes week fairs in the towns around Manchester. The Pankhursts persuaded Annie to put up for the local Lees committee of her union, The Card and Blowing-room Operatives Union. "I had to speak at every meeting" Annie wrote, "and I had to start by telling them I was a factory-girl and a Trade Unionist."

How did Oldham react to Annie's union and suffrage agitation? The town seemed, understandably, embarrassed; it preferred the gentler, law-abiding Suffragists led by Marjorie Lees. Only in 1974 did Oldham really acknowledge Annie by putting up a small plaque to her. It was probably quite relieved when Annie packed her wicker basket and finally left Oldham to take London by storm.

Helen Bradley was born in Lees in 1900. In *Miss Carter Came With Us* (her written and painted reminiscences) she remembers how provocative Annie Kenney was. "I was only six or seven at the time but Father said she was *shocking* — 'she showed her ankles'. So I looked at her after that, and sure enough her skirts were shorter than the skirts worn by the aunts . . . I also remember the women from all round Oldham meeting outside the Town Hall to meet Winston Churchill, who was our Member of Parliament — he was a Liberal — all in front of the Town Hall was packed with women all shouting and demanding the vote. They were exciting times . . . but after Annie Kenney left Oldham to link up with the Pankhursts and London, everyone simmered down."□

If you want to find out more about the Women's Movement in and around Manchester now . . .

Women's Centre

218 Upper Brook St., Manchester 13
(061-273 2287)

Women's Local History Group

Jill Liddington, 1 Woodend St., Springhead, Oldham, Lancs.

Women and Health

Jeb Khan, 061-925 8322

Women and Education

Judith Summers, Padgate College of Education, Warrington (Warrington 811 584)

Women and Literature

c/o the Women's Centre

Women and Art

Zoe Mumby, 061-248 6342

Women and Psychiatry

Janet Seed, Department of Psychology, University of Manchester, M3 9PL.

Northern Women's Liberation Rock Band

c/o the Women's Centre

Lesbian Collective

4 Manor Park Rd., Glossop, Derbyshire (Glossop 4121)

Salford Women's Rights Group

Jenny Clegg and Angela Libman, 24 Dayne Ave., Prestwich, Manchester.

Self Defence for Women

Angela Cooper, c/o the Women's Centre
National Abortion Campaign
c/o the Women's Centre

There are also local groups and consciousness raising groups in, eg Oldham. Contact the Women's Centre or the newsletter, available from Grass Roots or On the Eighth Day.

MOUSELIKE

by Rosemary Yates



Illustration by Elvira Noronha

In our desire not to be sexual objects for men, we are seeking to express a loving sexuality in an active way, without doing an about turn and reducing men to objects themselves. Rosemary Yates' story describes the horror of sexuality sharply defined and divided into masculine and feminine, subject and object, attack and defence.

Where is that gentle face? Something has died or gone into hiding, something timid scurried away into its little hole in the wall. I thought I saw a mouse earlier but then it was all a joke. The pillow-case is grubby, it's never been so grey and we've none clean. It didn't look so bad when I first got into bed. My hair will get dirty I know. I wish I had a nice clean, soft feathery one. Fit for an odalisque he beams. He says I look pretty, the mouth parts I show a smile, but there's no smile inside. Yet it was there before. Whatever was there has died. I close my eyes, I lie back on a slab of frayed stretched sheets. The bare light is directly above but lying on my back it should be quicker. He leaves a sliding, wet trail on my face. I'm cold, I don't want to go on top of the bedclothes, nor take off my nightgown. Always an excuse he says with a sigh. But honestly, this time I am cold, I am tired. But what's the use — all he'll do is fret over my health and turn up the fire until I can't breathe. He comes down on top of me.

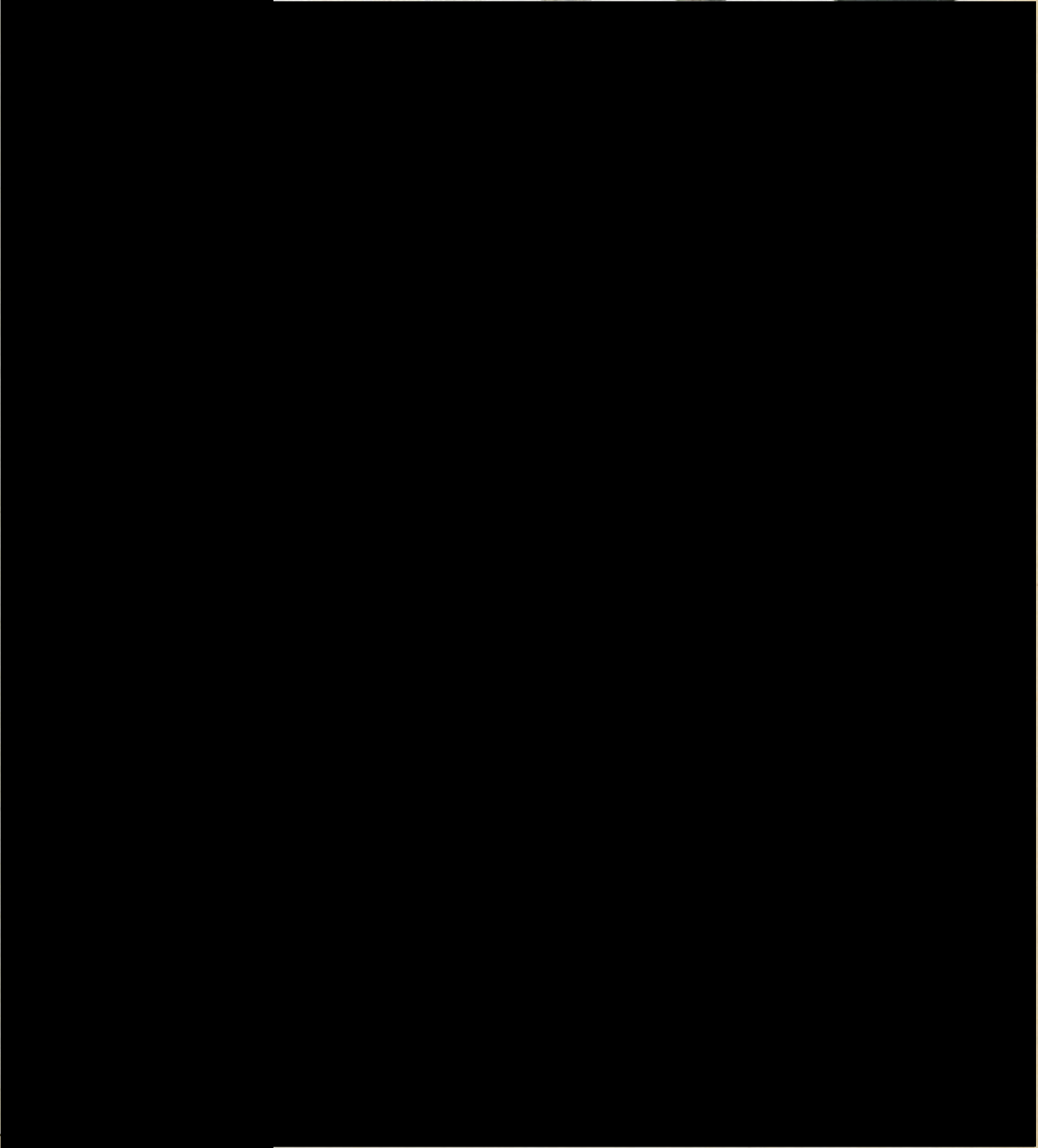
I feel my hair sweep all over the pillow, sweeping all the dirt underneath. He crushes me with his weight. My breathing gets jerky and gives the wrong impression. He begins to work hard on me all over, as if he's forgotten I'm here. They all do, and now he does — where's that kind look of his, the gentle line of the mouth? I can't understand how it vanished, it must have scurried away too. I take his face in my hands and trace his mouth, I draw it back but I can't find it. Is it the harsh light that alters his face? Or can't I see for the smell of his spilt nicotine? I let his head go and he looks up surprised. I put my arms around him, hoping to be encouraging but I always forget to move them. He works hard on the body playing with it with his hands. When the light's off I'm a beautiful curved instrument, he hears the music even if I don't. But not for long: the black grotesque shapes loom over me and come down without warning. I can't see where he is next, I have to put the light on. A spring thrusts upwards into my back,

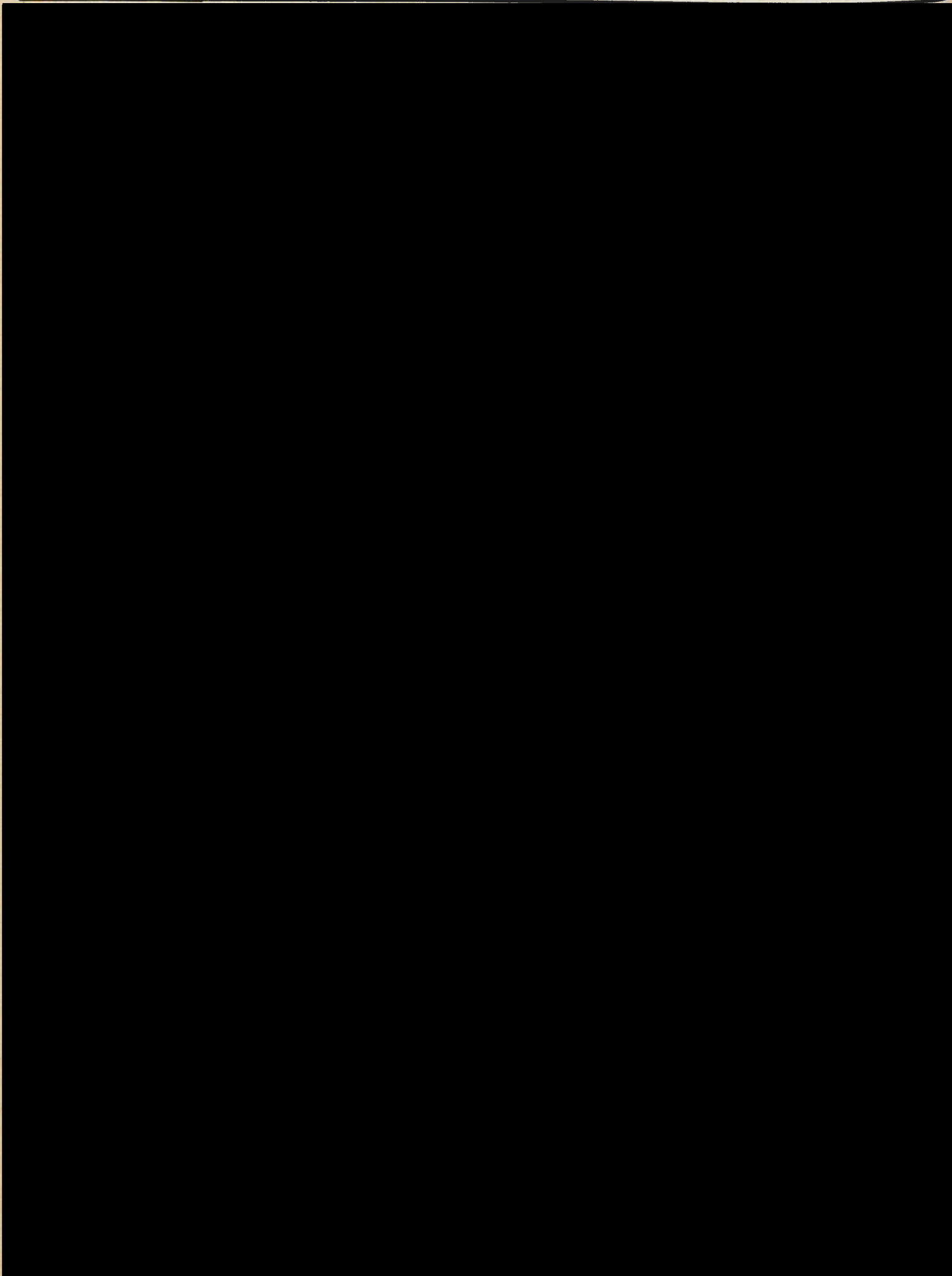
I wriggle to miss its aim. I could do with some water. Stop a minute. I lean up on one arm and drink from a glass on the table. I drink while he goes rummaging around between my legs. My strap falls off my shoulder and for a second I'm quite randy lying there. A tickle and the little mouse squeaks, pattering around its hole. But he wrecks it when he comes up from down below like a drunken frogman. He asks and I have to take off my nightgown. Now I'm fully exposed. I'm so cold — no, I am cold honestly. Stripped of an excuse he says. What do you mean excuse? I daren't stop him too long I know what will happen if he thinks I'm not going along with him. We could be lying awake until three. I'm pulled down again and underneath. He tries to keep me warm with the sheets and his body but it won't work. I'm suffocating. He gets up on top of the body and is everywhere at once. The body's swamped with him, his awkward shyness is just awkwardness. He's all over the place, I tense slightly. His head comes down on mine and his collarbone rubs against my chin. He's so engrossed playing with the body's limbs. Where has he gone? This is what they all come down to. Against the silence he makes little groans. I wish the radio was on. I could listen to something. I reach over to the switch. He looks up suddenly — where has he been all the time? He looks so naively shocked, it's laughable. I want to put on something — anything — no I'm not fed up. Why should I be fed up? Hurriedly I put a kiss on his cheek, anxious he doesn't sag and drop limp. His neck is like any other. Like mine, like anyone's, white and smooth with the usual smell of soap. It works wonders and he's back noisier than ever, perhaps because we haven't done it for a while. He rubs the sides while the spring pushes up again. And the blaring light pulls apart my shut lids. His snorts and groans are exaggerated, he must have got them from a film. I listen to them when I should be steadying him, guiding him. I find it hard to do everything at once. I can't remember what to do. Now he starts rubbing up the body making for the big grab. I hate this all over groping they all do it, working up like this. If only they would stick to the sides. I tense when they start this, I clench when they near. I've always hated it. I dart back inside, there's no haven anywhere. I look down at these breasts drooping over the edge — what can they find there? Two lumps of flesh like anybody's, I can't see what the fuss is. But they can see something and come hunting for it, working up insatiably prodding and groping. They claw at my breasts. With my elbow I cleverly guide him aside, I congratulate myself. Midnight. Surely he's almost finished, he's holding out a long time. I feel so tired, it should be over soon if I can keep him at it. We must paint that ceiling it's so stained with his smoke! The light shows up all the smears. What's the matter, he says, looking at me as if something was very wrong. Nothing, nothing at all. Each time he looks down it all adds to the time I have to lie here. I try and keep him at it, I tighten my grip round his back. I must encourage him now we've come so far. But he always looks so lost when he looks at me as if I'd slipped under the bed and left him. I shan't be able to go much longer if he keeps stopping, my tactics are failing, but he becomes more vigorous. His knees run up and down my legs like knobs of marble, it makes me weary. He pokes his way inside and I sigh with relief. I watch his backside move up and down under the sheets. He pushes hard trying to split me open but the whole thing's no thrill just ridiculous. It ought to be over by now, I move my hands across his back mechanically while he tunnels in and out, up and down, making me more and more drowsy. Every now and then he stops and sighs, he deceives me, I think it's all over. Then all at once he's at the body's breasts again, his mouth sticking like a limpet. I wake up and clench, I use my elbow to drive him away but he's not having any. He just doesn't see, he doesn't care — don't! That's all I said, I didn't want you to stop. He halts abruptly and flops onto the bed and doesn't speak. He lies there ages, now and then he makes these stunted movements. I'm not sorry, or bothered.

Don't be so melodramatic! But saying that has no effect, we'll be awake hours. I lie fairly comfortable now we've come to the end of it and follow a faint line on the wall opposite. Lost in its

hole the little mouse sleeps. I'm whitewashed with fatigue, I plead: I didn't mean you to stop, idiot, I was cold. Emptied I put my stare anywhere. He closes his eyes, placing his arm over them. Then he looks at me with all these faces saying all these things, I half hear their echoes later. The trouble is you've had a stupid upbringing, you're frigid, you really are. I say nothing, you really are goes on and on. Almost two-thirty and the light still on, and having to get up so early. I look over at him, quietly he's taken his hands away. In his profile I catch traces of his other half. I can feel mischief curdle inside at what would be so unexpected. Quickly without a second thought, I tickle his cheek with my tongue, but nothing. The mischief comes up bubbling, the only thing alive in the room. I kiss him, but nothing, not a flicker. His impassivity is encouraging, I feel quite awake, expectant, it's up to me. I tease him but he won't open his eyes. I take his head in my arms, it's both heavy and immovable but strangely fragile. I begin to recognise it, I recognise the fall of the eyebrows and begin to kiss them. I climb on top of him as slowly, as seductively as I can but it's hard when the sheets are so tight, and he's playing this hard to get stunt. I astonish us both by flinging the bed-clothes back disdainfully. Fully exposed to the bare room he still lies unmoved. I'm in where it's too deep — now what am I to do? The mischief fades so quickly. I'm left exasperated — he won't do anything. Am I to do everything? I sink my head on his shoulder and plead with my cheek. But no, he doesn't stir, he's an impassable mountain he's weighing me down even below me. He's not teasing or sulking, he seems to be waiting. With a dread I move my mouth over his face and neck; I expect to be flung aside. I don't know whether to leave little kisses or one long lick. I begin nibbling his chest but it's only a mouth on a chest — anyone's anywhere, no matter how hard I try. I don't mind him like this but I half wait for some kind of explosion, he isn't still inside. Am I trespassing? I try everything to rouse him, almost defeated I stroke him and he stirs. He comes awake in my arms, his vulnerable slenderness fills my arms, he's a wounded bird. My hands follow his shape, I'm there centred in each of them moving over his slim shape. His nakedness against mine excites me, a burning liquid begins to run. I seem to be flowering. My breasts hold full and firm on his chest. I curve round him, I fondle, caress, recognise him. I discover his hair. I close my eyes and know him in the dark. He is so real, so near, I can hardly tell where we cease to join. The fire running inside me seeks out an opening. He puts his arms around me and holds me, gingerly I excite him. But he becomes more and more lively, he anticipates me, he wants to be the first. The more vigorous he is the more I harden. From below he overwhelms, involuntarily I back out slowly. He rises over me in unquestionable movements, he's above me, it's irreversible. I lie down on my side again, under the bare light. His hand goes about handling. My face is fixed, I'm rooted, he's taking over. I push him back and climb on top, I want to see that face again. He's too earnest he prods and leaves me out. He's changed it's all gone. I have to think hard what to do, how to bring it all back. I go over my movements I study his face, I move the mouth, the brows, but it's gone. He eats me away, rubs me away. I scurry away into my hole, I leave nothing outside. What's the matter — nothing. I take hold of his head to show there's nothing wrong. But I leave it, I let it fall on the pillow. You're fed up. No I'm not. I don't feel anything, he doesn't believe me anyway. He sinks down on to the bed hopelessly falling limp. He seems exhausted, deadened. There's no movement, he lies there motionless. I climb up again. I take him, I lie on him almost crushing. He can hardly breathe. He's so lethargic it's easy to tickle him without caring about anything happening. With a thrill I see him lie there like helpless prey, a conquest. I tantalize and he doesn't respond. I wander down his face drawing in different lines about the mouth; this is my lover, this beautiful slender body. I stretch up to see him better. But he looks away at the ceiling his eyes half-closed. All I see is myself cringing above a vacant dummy, I fall back on the bed stranded. He looks over at me without sympathy. □

NEWS





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HOMOSEXUALITY Sexual "problem" or Political problem

As a follow-up to Gay Liberation Front's successful disruption of the British Medical Association's 1974 Congress on 'Psychosexual Problems', the two-day conference on sexuality at Bradford University in April this year aimed to draw together gay people with members of the medical profession, social services and counselling agencies to discuss medical and social attitudes to homosexuality.

Workshops centred around the political and social aspects of sexual oppression and repression in society, and an examination of the best methods of helping and counselling gay people encountering difficulties in dealing with this oppression. The atmosphere was friendly and informal, the papers and workshops were informative and useful. To this extent and in terms of the social arrangements the conference can be said to have been a success.

In that less than a third of Friday's audience of over a hundred were actually members of the medical or allied professions, and by Saturday probably fewer still, the conference hardly achieved its aim. Perhaps those concerned have decided homosexuality is no longer a 'problem' . . .

though plans for the 1975 follow-up in York to the BMA's 1974 fiasco would seem to dispute this.

That said . . . it was an enjoyable and instructive two days, especially for those of the audience who saw themselves as heterosexual and had perhaps never attended a gay conference. There were two theatrical events, the General Will's 'Pub Show' and Bradford GLF's own 'All Het Up'. Both pieces received loud applause. The GLF theatre workshop was especially notable in that most of the cast had never acted before, and they probably showed us as much about gay oppression as any of the more academic workshops.

All the main papers were given by women and there was an excellent talk on women's sexuality by Mary McIntosh. Ms McIntosh opened with an outline of six major differences between female and male sexuality as demonstrated by scientific observational research (Kinsey, Masters and Johnson). These differences, she pointed out, have most often been assumed to have a biological basis. Her thesis was to show that if it is true that the male sex drive is in fact of a more active nature than the

female, this fact can be best explained socially.

She went on to point out that without locating the findings of sex researchers in their social context, we cannot begin to consider whether there are any differences that are in fact *given*. She brought up three possible causes of the observed differences: male privilege, sexual repression and a double standard of sexuality, and the economic dependence of women on men. But while these three points could lead to every observed difference between male and female sexuality, the common view is to regard biology as the determining factor. This is where the medical profession, the so-called "experts" in the biological are involved.

"It is thought that the medical profession ought to know what our sexuality is about." She hardly found it necessary to add that whatever sexual problems gay people might encounter, they were certainly not medical ones. As she pointed out, "lesbianism can be a problem for the woman involved, but it is a problem of our time with respect to a sexual ideology that it is possible to change, and that is why sexual 'problems' are political problems."

One aspect of sexuality where, like it or not, the medical profession have to be involved is that of trans-sexuality and it was particularly disappointing that by Saturday morning most of the GPs seemed to have left. Trans-sexuals attacked the medical profession for their insistence that self-diagnosis was invalid. Apparently doctors feel that it is up to them to decide whether you are a *real* trans-sexual. Trans-sexuals were tired of being told to "live with it for a few years first." Their isolation leads to depression, often culminating in suicide. Far from saving lives, doctors may be indirectly killing them.

Steve, a female to male trans-sexual from Manchester, brought up the often glossed-over point that trans-sexuals are often targets of attack on both sides . . . from gay liberation and women's liberation as well as the medical profession. "It is often said that trans-sexuals are role-playing and I am frequently attacked for

wearing a tie. What people perhaps don't realise is that I am obliged to wear a tie, otherwise I don't get my pills."

The two other main workshops were given by Margaret Coulson from Lancaster and Rose Robertson from Parents Enquiry. Margaret Coulson discussed the construction of gender, arguing that women, especially in the nineteenth century, have had their sexuality controlled by the medical profession. Assertive or feminist middle class women were seen as needing treatment to bring them into line (the last clitoridectomy was only 25 years ago), whilst working class women were seen as disease carriers and excessive breeders, threatening middle class morality and power. The counselling services, she felt, had joined the medical profession in its unthinking acceptance of the status quo, joining in the social control of women who challenged male definitions of femininity.

Rose Robertson spoke of work with under age gays, who usually felt at the age of eleven or thereabouts simply "different". "By fifteen everything has usually fallen into place." She spoke of the arrogance of the heterosexual world which felt it had a right to control and direct the life of gay people, and the problem of making a heterosexual family understand that its gay child had a right to a different life and set of values. She attacked the myth of the "passing phase" as denying the validity of homosexuality and tricking gays into impossible situations like heterosexual marriage.

Even if attendance by the medical and social work professions was disappointingly low, Bradford GLF must be congratulated in taking the initiative in organising the first national conference on this theme. There were no technical hitches, everything running smoothly up till the culminating disco on Saturday night. And something positive did come out of it. At one of the smaller workshops it was decided to try and set up a group for the befriending and counselling of physically handicapped gay people. Anyone interested should contact Sam Davies, 5 Hyde Park Terrace, Leeds 6. □

Ros Carne

NEWS

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE: STRUCTURE OR CO-ORDINATION?

The women's movement has always been wary of formal organisation, which seems to rob people of the power to control their own lives. So it was the question of formal organisation which brought the most heated discussion at the National Women's Liberation conference's plenary session in Manchester's Free Trade Hall on April 5 and 6.

Perhaps it was the success of the conference, itself a feat of organisation, which took the edge off the debate when it

started.

It had been a business-like conference, with some hard work being done in the workshops, and the ease of access to facilities, whether food or bookstall, information or entertainment, must have been rather seductive after shambling affairs in previous years.

So the proposal to establish a voluntary working party to suggest ways of organising the movement formally seemed reasonable enough in the circumstances. It was only when a sister made an impassioned outburst about the dangers of putting power into the hands of any one group of people that the pitfalls of bureaucracy returned to mind. Put to the vote, the proposal was defeated, but there was a big show of hands on both sides.

If structure was a dangerous

word, co-ordination was more appealing, and proposals by women from Canterbury and Leeds to establish a National Information Centre and newsletter were received as a useful, apolitical attempt to provide facilities to keep everyone in touch.

Another group of women is hoping to set up a national women's newspaper to circulate inside and outside the movement and the conference workshop arranged to meet again on May 10 for more detailed discussions.

Despite the intense disagreement about the political implications of organising nationally in a formal way, the conference was generally harmonious, without any of the distracting wranglings which have marked earlier conferences.

Four resolutions about the system of national conferences were discussed. It was decided to continue with the same format, holding annual national conferences, but there was strong feeling that the cultural and social aspects should be developed further, with more plays, stalls and films integrated with the more conventional aspects of conferences, the workshops and plenary sessions.



Marilyn Archer

POWDERED MILK KILLS: NESTLE SUES THIRD WORLD CAMPAIGNERS

Nestle has responded swiftly to accusations against its sales and advertising techniques in the Third World (*Spare Rib* 34). The "Arbeitsgruppe Dritte Welt Bern", a Swiss Third World group which translated War on Want's *The Baby Killer* into German, is being sued by Nestle on a charge of libel and defamation.

The company's main aim, it appears, is to improve its public image by forcing the Arbeitsgruppe work group to place lengthy advertisements in newspapers and on TV retracting their allegations that Nestle's activities are responsible for the deaths of thousands of Third World babies.

The Arbeitsgruppe see the case as a golden opportunity in a country where interest in Third World events is notoriously lacking. By refusing to accede to any of Nestle's demands, they are hoping for a blaze of publicity over a court case in which one of the largest food corporations in the world, and the tenth largest multinational outside the USA, has instigated lengthy proceedings against an unknown group of only twenty or so people, in the very country where the company is most powerful — for, to many people, Nestle is Switzerland.

The Arbeitsgruppe chose to concentrate their attack on Nestle because it is a Swiss company. Cow & Gate and Glaxo are more obvious targets for people in Britain. These two, though less powerful than Nestle, use the same techniques to persuade mothers in the Third World to change from breast-feeding to bottle-feeding.

Katherine Levine

Baby Foods Action Group,
103 Gower Street, London
WC1E 6AW. Tel: 01-387 3710.
Further information on the Nestle v. Arbeitsgruppe Dritte Welt Bern case is available from the same address. □



Broken window at Labour Party headquarters, Transport House

Statement issued by the women responsible for property damage on 19 April 1975:

Last night bricks were thrown through the windows of public buildings which symbolise male power and values and perpetuate women's oppression.

Today is the day of action called by the Women's Liberation Movement to protest against the so-called Sex Discrimination Bill.

Like the Suffragettes, the Women's Liberation Movement has attempted to work through the accepted channels and, like them, some of us are no longer prepared to waste our time using these means to ask

men for what is rightfully ours.

Whilst we in no way recognise the right of men to have power over our lives, we daily experience the power they wield. Examples of the male machinery which oppresses us as women are: government departments such as the DHSS, party political headquarters, the Home Office, the United Nations (responsible for International Women's Year), the media, such as BBC Broadcasting House, IPC ("women's magazines"), the medical profession, which helps to define women as "sick" (the BMA), and the pharmaceutical industry which provides tranquillisers to keep us quiet. □

GENERAL WILL

The General Will, who put on their 'Pub Show' at the Bradford Conference on Sexuality, can be contacted at 25 Blenheim Road, Bradford BD8 7LH, tel: 0274 49536.

The Pub Show included 'Masculinity', a parody of the growling Elvis-Gary Glitter-lurex-shades syndrome, and a well-loved song called 'Oh boy, I'm in love with a boy' sung to acoustic guitar:

Oh I don't want to be a family man

*I don't want a substitute wife
A house and an insurance plan
ain't my kind of life*

I can't be part of a revolutionary plan

Which denies my sexual role.

'Oh boy, I'm in love with a boy' is a dig at so-called revolutionary organisations who calmly assert that organising around gay oppression is irrelevant to class struggle. □

CROSFIELD ELECTRONICS OCCUPATION: WOMEN ON PICKET LINE

On March 6 some of the employees of the De La Rue corporation were told that they would lose their jobs on the 27th. They were workers in one of the factories in De La Rue's Crosfield complex on Holloway Road, North London.

This factory was the main assembly area where the complex electronic equipment they produce was put together.

The whole section was to move to the Westward factory in Peterborough, leaving the other workers behind.

The majority of the women who work for De La Rue are employed in the assembly section. This 70 strong group of women have their own shop steward, but the union organisation (AUEW) is very much

the domain of the 280 men who work there. The assembly section had become the major stronghold of the union in Crosfields as the result of five years of hard work in the factory.

Their latest success, before the redundancies came up, was to win an increase in the women's pay relative to men. The women in the assembly section were to get 80% of the skilled rate. However this was never implemented. Instead the women lost their jobs.

The same rates were negotiated for the women in Peterborough where the new factory is due to expand. The crucial difference is that in London this demand would be followed through, and the women's pay would not have been allowed to slip behind. In Peterborough this was not the case as is shown by the increase in the differential between the men and the women in the last pay agreement.

The De La Rue corporation is a large multi-national firm which is a subscriber to the

Economic League, an employers organisation which, among other things, distributes lists of "subversives" to its members. A few years ago, the De La Rue corporation bought the Crosfield factories for £6.1m. from J.F. Crosfield, the original owner. At this time a statement was made to the employees that the sale would create job opportunities, and there was certainly no scent of job redundancies. However, De La Rue shares with all other firms moving out of London the economic incentives provided by the government (see *Spare Rib* 34). Moreover it has the added incentive of a factory in Peterborough where the union organisation is weak.

When the Crosfield employees were first told that their jobs were to go, some people left immediately, outraged by the casual way in which they were dismissed. Other people decided to sit in, and there was 100% agreement among those who remained that they should keep the factory open. At first the agreement was

that they should continue to come into work until March 26, nominally working and drawing their pay. When the 26th came the agreement changed to one that they should occupy the factory.

At the meeting called on the 26th, doubt was expressed by the men as to whether the women should be allowed to take part in the occupation. The women strongly resented this and, after arguing with the convenor and members of the joint shop stewards committee, a compromise was reached where they agreed that the women should come in during the day and take part in the picket line, but that they shouldn't stay over night. It was felt that had there been more women in assembly, the balance of power would have been different.

The workers at Crosfields would welcome any contributions to their strike fund. Please send donations to William Hayman (Press Officer), 34 Dresden Rd., London N19 3BD. □

Cathy Haw

ABORTION: MORE THAN A CONVENTIONAL MEETING

I had read articles about abortion in *Spare Rib* and elsewhere, but only really registered how urgent it is to act against this Bill when I was with 800 other people at a National Abortion Campaign meeting on April 16 in the Grand Committee Room of the House of Commons. This room was packed out so quickly that people queueing outside had to overflow into another.

The platform was full of set speeches, from Labour MPs, trade unionists, doctors and lawyers. But even though there was no time for questions or discussion from the floor, it was more than a conventional meeting. People were fantastically supportive and sympathetic to all the speakers, and the whole atmosphere was exciting and urgent. It must have pushed many women from concern into action.

Renee Short, Labour MP for Wolverhampton NE, was the first to speak, lamenting the fact that the basic issue of the right to abortion had come up again. "I am very annoyed to have to fight this because of the stupidity of so many of my male colleagues in this place."

Horror stories about abortion would, she said, be referred from now on to the Director of Public Prosecutions, which might put a stop to propaganda put out by what she would only call "a certain organisation".

Since the evidence in *Babies for Burning* — in her words "a piece of gutter journalism" — had been exposed as fraudulent, she had been pushing the Leader of the Commons, Edward Short — "no relation" — to disband the Select Committee.

She also criticised the composition of the Select Committee — of 15 members, only four are women, and the majority is known to be anti-abortion. A group of women Labour MPs are fighting for more women to be put on the Select Committee. Renee Short is photocopying all the letters she gets about this, and against James White's Bill in general,

and sending them on to the Clerk of the Committee, Harold Wilson, Edward Short, Bob Mellish (Chief Whip), and, in response to someone in the audience, to Margaret Thatcher as well. Which should be an incentive to write to Renee Short.

Marguerite Russell, a barrister, explained how the Bill infringes civil liberties to an extent rivalled only by the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Official Secrets Act.

It starts by attacking the medical profession, implying that young doctors in partnership would run abortion rackets. It intimidates doctors by putting the burden of proof on them: doctors accused of giving an unjustified abortion would have to prove themselves innocent. This is a reversal of British practice, where the accused is "innocent until

proved guilty". There are, she said, only two other such areas: if charged with carrying offensive weapons in public places, or with carrying a screwdriver and jemmy at night.

Further, the prosecutor can remain anonymous — unique in British law — so SPUC could continually push charges. The Bill also inserts the words "grave" and "serious" into the 1967 clause about risk to health. These terms are notoriously ill-defined in law, and it would be very difficult for a doctor to prove a "grave risk" or "serious injury." Very few doctors would dare to recommend or carry out any abortions at all in the face of such legislation. This is of course just what its sponsors intend.

Clause 5, restricting the giving of advice about abortion, is also dangerous. It would do far more than control taxi-touts. It would affect Citizen's Advice

Bureaux, law centres, paid workers for women's groups and for Women's Aid Centres, social workers and teachers — anyone who in the course of paid employment gives advice about abortion. However, the definition of "in the course of paid employment" is so vague that it might apply to voluntary workers in pregnancy testing groups, for instance, who get money from other sources.

The Bill states that "It will be an offence for any person to publish or cause to be published" the identity of any woman who has had an abortion or advice about abortion. Marguerite Russell stressed — and this amazed me — that "publish" does not just mean write about but also speak about. It would be a crime for a woman to tell anyone at all that she had had an abortion.

This is obviously an attack on freedom of speech. It also attacks the "freedom" of the press. Since she could not even speak about it, a woman clearly could not write about her experience of abortion, as there is nothing in the Bill about publication with the permission of the woman concerned. This is not protection; it is censorship. The whole subject becomes taboo.

Criminal cases concerning abortion could not be reported, as neither the woman who had had the abortion nor the prosecutor could be named. Discussion of abortion would be possible only within the walls of Parliament.

Women's magazines could neither answer nor publish letters asking about abortion. We could not have articles in *Spare Rib* giving information about the availability of abortion — information essential to women. In fact we could print virtually nothing about abortion, not even descriptions of the consequences suffered by women unable to get legal abortions. Similarly, no woman could say if she had been exploited or injured by a backstreet abortionist, as the operation would have been illegal, and so would any mention of it. □

Jill Nicholls

The National Abortion Campaign is at 80 Railton Road, London SE24.

HORROR COMIC EXPOSED



Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish

In *Spare Ribs* 32, 34 and 35 we followed James White's attempt to destroy the 1967 Abortion Act to the point at which a parliamentary select committee had been established; meanwhile the TUC Women's Conference at Hastings saw an overwhelming vote in favour of abortion on demand. Now read on...

Babies for Burning

The story of the horror comic *Babies for Burning* — a collection of unsubstantiated anti-abortion tales — is by now well known. But the solemn reception it received from self-styled Serious, Respectable and Responsible Citizens is in danger of being forgotten. This would be a pity, because the story demonstrates that the anti-abortion lobby will swallow and regurgitate any nonsense if it happens to come in handy as political ammunition. And political ammunition is what this lobby desperately needs as long as the Select Committee is sitting.

In *The Spectator* of 18 January, Mr Leo Abse MP reviewed the horror comic under the heading "The Murder Trade of the London Abortion Clinics". "They came to the problem," he wrote lyrically of the two authors Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish, "as virginal and pristine as only young journalists can be." Curious adjectives to use about contributors to the *News of the World*, one might suppose. "One cannot forbear to pay them tribute," he said.

In *The Times* of 23 January, Mr Ronald Butt, whose eccentric views on women, birth control and abortion are well known, reviewed the book with equal portentousness. "The silence" he wrote, "has been deafening." What he seems to have meant by this,

was that outside the ranks of the Roman Catholic and extreme right wing press, the comic had not been taken seriously.

This was shocking. Why? Because the allegations contained in it "appear to be based on irrefutable evidence". On 30 January, Mr Butt reverted to the comic again. He hoped the "truth" about its allegations would soon be established in view of the "Pontius Pilate posture of the DHSS." There was no mention in either of Mr Butt's two long articles of the evidence collected by two other sources which made it clear that the principal allegation in the comic was in fact highly 'refutable'. When Mr Butt declined to mention this, Mr William Rees-Mogg, the Roman Catholic editor of *The Times*, was informed of the material, as was Mr Bernard Levin. Silence.

White Embraces the Comic

Naturally no one wished to embarrass James White. On 5 December, the *Scottish Daily Record* had published an article on his proposed bill beside a worried-looking photograph of White. The text read: "He admits that his personal researches have consisted of 'reading up' the available material included in a book not yet published with the highly emotive title 'Babies for Burning'."

Black Sunday

On 30 March, *The Sunday Times* printed its now celebrated revelations under the heading *Abortion Horror Tales Revealed As Fantasies*. These were accompanied by photographs of the two virginal and pristine authors, and of Leo Abse MP in his natty check suit, marching in an anti-abortion demonstration

under a banner bearing the legend 'Abortion a Blot on the 20th Century Like the Gas Chambers and the Purges.' Anyone who has missed this important piece of investigative journalism should order a copy of this issue without delay.

The Deafening Silence

And what did all the Responsible Citizens have to say about these devastating revelations? Did they apologise to their readers and constituents for leading them up the garden path?

What about Mrs Jill Knight MP, a sponsor of White's Bill?

"I was given the opportunity by the authors of listening to the tapes. Only being short of time prevented my doing so."

Birmingham Evening Mail 5 April

What about poor old White himself?

"From the first I viewed this book with suspicion... I have been made to look a fool... I am furious... This can now be used as a great weapon against my Bill."

Scottish Daily Record 1 April

"My burning ambition is to see abortion centres set up within the National Health Service."

Sunday Times 8 April

Truly, the most staggering conversion since St Paul.

And what of Mr Valiant-After-Truth-Butt in *The Times*? Why, three weeks later, still a "deafening silence". And what of Mr Leo Abse MP in *The Spectator*? Ditto.

SPUC Sales

You may have a little difficulty in obtaining a copy of the horror comic as W H Smith do not seem keen to handle it: "We are not really handling this book. I really cannot comment further except to say that when legal difficulties surrounding this title are resolved satisfactorily we will get it for customer order, but not for general stock or display."

Southport Journal Visitor 15 March

Meanwhile, SPUC will help out. On 25 March their press secretary in Wales, Mr Peter West, wrote to the *South Wales Argus* to say:

"... those who experience difficulty in obtaining a copy of the book... should write to SPUC together with a postal order for 75p."

What with Michael Litchfield busy on SPUC and LIFE platforms, and Susan Kentish a member of Women for Life, an organisation that believes that "abortion is homicide" (*Mother* April 1975), distributing the book is a small way of repaying a pretty embarrassing debt.

Trade Union Activity

The triumph at the TUC Women's Conference must not lead to complacency. At the annual conference of the National Union of Teachers on 2 April "the clause demanding free contraceptives and free abortion on demand proved too controversial for the union, thousands of whose members are Roman Catholics."

Daily Telegraph 3 April

The Catholic lobby is strong in the NUT because of the large numbers of Catholic teachers teaching in Catholic schools. Many of these teachers and many of their pupils have been involved in anti-abortion demonstrations on Holy Innocents Day and on other religious festivals. If any readers are interested in forming a counter group to campaign on this issue within the NUT, would they please contact Sally Hesmondhalgh (address below).

Late News

There are disturbing rumours that the parliamentary session may be extended. This would be bad news for us, since this would give the anti-abortion lobby longer time in which to push their legislation through all its stages in parliament. It is therefore more important than ever that anyone who has anything to say to the Select Committee, which is in open session every Monday afternoon from 4-6, should write in to give notice of this without delay.

The address is Mr J R Rose, Committee Office, House of Commons, London SW1. Please indicate which section of James White's bill you wish to give evidence about. If you are unsure, please get in touch with Sally Hesmondhalgh who will be very glad to help. Her address is: Woman's Right to Choose, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9DE, 278 4575. Also, any further experiences with Lifeline would be welcome. □

Liz Warren

NEWS

How To Take The Abortion Campaign Into Your Area

The National Abortion Campaign is organising a demonstration in London on June 21. Here Eileen Fairweather from Brighton suggests some guidelines for local organisation, to ensure the biggest possible turnout on June 21.

1) Form a local National Abortion Campaign group, and publicise it through the local media. Invite delegates from any organisation that could be useful — trade unions, student unions, political groups.

2) Contact NAC nationally. Register your group and get on their mailing list. They, and the Woman's Right to Choose, can also give advice. (The Woman's Right to Choose used to be called the Abortion Law Reform Association. It hopes, when and if we have gained this hurdle, to get a bill through Parliament calling for free abortion on demand. It is already sponsored by several MPs [eg Renee Short, Joyce Butler]. WRTC is a part of NAC, and is mainly responsible for the parliamentary side of the fight.)

3) Elect a committee simply to thrash out ideas beforehand — say 7 or 8 people. This means that you know who has overall responsibility for what, and that meetings are about *action* and not just chat or vague ideas.

4) Write to your local MP, as well as to MPs on the Select Committee (the WRTC leaflet "Why we must fight the Abortion [Amendment] Bill and how to go about it" — available from 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1 X9E, price 15p inc. postage — tells you who they are, and what their affiliations are). Also write to the opposition candidates in your constituency and ask them what *they* are doing about it.

5) Persuade everyone you know who has either had an abortion or been refused one, or gone through with a pregnancy later regretted, to write about it. You can then send this as evidence to the Select Committee. *However*, it has to be from a group — eg NAC Brixton — because they will not accept evidence from individuals. Bristol WACC's evidence to the Lane Commission is an example of how this should be done. Sending evidence is very important because it holds the Select Committee back. Some women will feel reluctant about giving evidence. Try to show them that no one should have to go through the trauma they perhaps did. If necessary, write collectively so you can give each other support.

6) Join in collecting signatures for the petitions that are available (from WRTC and from Red Rag, 9 Stratford Villas, London NW1). If you have an abortion clinic locally, you could see if the director is willing to help you in

collecting both evidence and signatures for the petition. To get signatures, you could divide the area up amongst the group, street by street. We have found the question "Do you believe in a woman's right to choose?" gets a far more favourable response than "Do you believe in abortion on demand?" — even though they mean much the same. Don't waste time on long arguments. Collect filled-in petition forms regularly, and send them back to WRTC or Red Rag. If you have friendly shops in your area, ask them to take petitions having first put up a poster in the shop so people know the petition is there if they want to sign it. Petition in shopping centres — you could wear sandwich boards so you don't have to approach everyone individually.

7) Hold public meetings to draw in new people. Get articles in the local paper, and answer any anti-abortion correspondence. Make the most of radio phone-ins. Always remember to stress

that abortion is actually under attack — a lot of people still don't realise this. Complain loudly if contraception and abortion services are particularly bad in your area. Find out what housing there is for single mothers, what nursery facilities for mothers who work outside the home, and what jobs are available with flexible working hours.

8) Get motions of support through your trades council, trade unions, etc. Send copies to WRTC (see their leaflet for a model resolution).

9) Stickers and posters should be available soon nationally, but there's not much money so try to make your own too. Plaster the town with them two or three weeks before the national demonstration.

10) National Demonstration: June 21, London. Stress that it will be peaceful, because a lot of people are frightened by the very idea of a demonstration. Everyone welcome, including kids and men. Organise coaches and, if possible, raise some money so you can make it known you can subsidise those who can't afford the fare.

11) All this will cost money, so start fund-raising too. Usual methods: donations, whip-rounds, etc.

12) For the time-being, try to prioritise this campaign over other activities.

13) Keep a record of who is doing what. Check on progress and insist on full reports back. This can help people who have volunteered but don't know how to go about things, increases efficiency and spreads the workload.

All these actions are important, including the laborious ones like petitioning and writing to lists of MPs. In fact they are very important, because it was SPUC bombarding MPs with letters that helped bring about this attack in the first place. They were so organised that they got 80,000 out on their anti-abortion rally last April. We must have a massive turnout on June 21. □

ABORTION



KEEP IT
LEGAL
KEEP IT
SAFE!

FIGHT JAMES WHITE'S AMENDMENT

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION JUNE 21st

Posters available at 3p each plus P&P from NAC, 26 South Avenue, Brighton, or tel: 0273 685431. Bulk orders welcome.

COURSES

You are invited to apply for a two year post-grad course which is open to people without formal qualifications who are interested in the relation between planning and the crisis of the environment, struggle in the community, problems of underdevelopment and urbanisation in the Third World and in 'Socialist' countries. The course is structured around lectures, seminars and independent research, and there is an attempt to develop a radical approach to urban problems. SSRC bursaries are available. Applications close by 31st May and all those interested should contact: Planning Department, Architectural Association, 34-36 Bedford Square, London WC2. 01-636 0974.

BOOKS ETC.

Women's Outrigger special double issue £1.00 Outrigger Publishers Ltd., 59 Galloway, Hamilton, N.Z.

Women and Socialism Conference Papers 3 - available from Jill Lampert, 26 Lonsdale Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9RA. 12p.

Women & Science: Special issue by the women and science collective of 'Science for People' (the quarterly magazine of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science). Articles on science as a sexist activity and its implications for women, why girls don't do science, power and sexism in the laboratory, women, food and nutrition, the political implications of creches, hair-dyes and the hazards of home. 25p + 5p postage from BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

Nuclear weapons still threaten everyone - keep in touch with latest developments by reading CND's Newspaper SANITY. 10p a copy or £1 a year, write to CND, Eastbourne House, Bullards Place, London E2.

SAPPHO, the only lesbian feminist magazine in Europe. 40p inc. post. BCM/PETREL, London WC1 6XX. Meetings held every Tuesday, 7.30pm, upstairs room, The Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London W2. Off Westbourne Grove. 40p admission for non-subscribers.

Women's Liberation Literature or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H. Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh.

New Design WL Badge 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American Pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. Postage) from Sisterhood Books c/o 22 Great Windmill St, London W1

Anti-Apartheid News describes what life is like in Vorster's South Africa Rhodesia, Namibia and Portugal's former African colonies. exposes British collaboration with apartheid - and involves you in the fight against it. 10 issues a year. Membership of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (which includes subscription to AA News £2 pa: subscription only 75p pa. Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte St., London W1. Tel 01-580 5211

GROUPS

Any groups in Romford area? Contact Barbara, 12 Tixall Road, Stafford.

TWICKENHAM New group starting Phone Linda 898 4404 or Janey 892 1770

KINGSTON-NEW MALDEN areas. Anyone interested in forming women's group phone Cat 390 0898 or Eleanor 949 2596

Romford area - anyone interested in starting a group contact Maggie Moore, 125 Hilldene Ave, Harold Hill, Romford, Essex

NEWCASTLE Women's Liberation group meets Tuesdays at 7.30pm at 78 Jesmond Rd.

PERSONAL

Aberystwyth area isolated feminist would like to meet others. Lesley Davison, Eithinbach, Brynafan, Llanafan, Aberystwyth.

Female 21 student seeks non-sexist relationship with thinking male in North-East. Box No.361.

SHY STUDENT, 23 very lonely, sincere, needs woman wanting lasting sharing relationship. Box No.362.

STOKE man, 26, seeks friendship liberated women. Lover of children, animals, music and outdoor activities. Marriage definitely out, but would consider equal share of responsibility of home with right person. Box No.363.

CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP MADE EASY if you are single male British and would marry to get it. If you're interested write to a woman who requires British citizenship and we'll talk about it. Box No. 364.

MAN, mid thirties, intelligent, creative, lonely, lives West London, seeks love/marriage with compatible girl, who, like him, feels that none is fun, and that life can be complete without a family. Rather young for his age, he thinks he would relate best to someone in her early twenties, but this is not absolute. He respects women's rights and expects them to respect his. Box No.366.

WANTED

Did any of you folks take photos of Anne Murray or tape the show at Victoria Palace? Wanna sell 'em? Write and state price. Box No.365.

We are researching a film about Women and Mental Health. Do you have any experiences or information and advice? Please write to us. Women's Film Collective, 10a Connaught St, London W1.

THERAPY

PRIMAL THERAPY write Jenny James, Atlantis, Burtonport, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Eire.

Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies Highgate area. Tel. 01-348 5593

Carlotta Palfi, psychotherapist English and German. Battersea Park. Tel 01-720 1667

SERVICES

MOTHERTRUCKERS for removals women moving women ring Cheryl 960 2723

Removals. Woman will move you around London UK Europe up to two tons. Tel 624 1951 Suzy.

READING AND PENCIL PORTRAIT from photo £2. Holmes, 15 Eton Ave, East Barnet EN4 8TU.

HAIR CUT WITH CARE and interest by ex-Mayfair stylist in the comfort of your home or mine. TELEPHONE DAVID 794 4437 (24 answer service).

Photodates you choose from hundreds SAE for free details CEI (SR) 3 Manor Road, Romford, Essex.

Female/female exclusive introductions highly confidential service for release, friendship liberation etc SAE - 'Lesbos and Ariadne', The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT.

Homosexual women and men can ring Icebreakers on 01-274 9590 every evening of the year between 7.30 and 10.30 to talk over their problems with other gay people.

CLASSIFIEDS

If you want to join or start a group, find work or a travel companion, start a household or share a house, having something to sell or swap . . . then run your own Classified Ad.

Rates: 5p per word, 10p caps. £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad.) 50p for box numbers.

Payment: Ads. must be prepaid and sent to Spare Rib, 4 Newburgh St., London W1A 4XS. Please make all cheques and PO's payable to Spare Ribs Ltd.

Conditions: Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

Copy date: May 30th for June 25th.

Tick if Box No. required ☐

Tick if Semi-display required ☐

I enclose £..... for no. of issues.

Name:

Address:

Print your ad. below in block capitals, one word in each box.

Underline any words you require in caps.

7		
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GAYWAY, your own personal gay dating service, totally discreet and here to help you find your right gay friend. Send first class stamp for details. You won't regret it. GAYWAY 77 Fortis Green Road, London N10.

ACCOMMODATION

FOOTLOOSE AND FANCY FREE female ex-design student seeks self sufficient household to live and work in. Alison Box No.367.

Modernised Pied a Terre, WC1 semi basement. Bedsitter (wall bed, fitted carpets, curtains etc) bathroom, kitchen/pantry overlooking plant area. Leasehold 36 years £10,750. Enquiries 01-278 1501.

Charming detached Georgian cottage (2 hrs London - ¼ hr Bristol/Bath). Consists of Porch, Plant room, Hall, Cloakroom, Sittingroom, Diningroom, Kitchen, Cellar, 3 Bedrooms, Bathroom & small garden overlooking surrounding countryside. Wooten under Edge Gloucs £16,250. Enquiries 01-278 1501.

EVENTS

Benefit dance for Stoke Newington 5 at North London Polytechnic, Holloway Rd, London N5 on Friday May 30th 7.30-11pm. Bands include the Stepney Sisters and the West London Street Band. The Stoke Newington 5 are about halfway through their sentences, money is needed for books, visits, etc. Entrance 60p.

TRAVEL

ATHENS & EUROPE by coach from £19. Weekly departures. Phone 01-734 1127 Euro Express Lloyd Oxford Circus.

Guaranteed low cost jet flights Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Tokyo, Bangkok, India, Pakistan, Tehran, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Nairobi, Morocco, Tunis, Canary Islands, Greece and rest of Europe. Jet-set Travel, 5th floor, 62 Oxford Street, London W1. 01-637 1971/580 3298.

JOBS

Lightweight camping leaders wanted for mixed groups of children wide age range. Educational to build non authoritarian community. Experience not essential. Hard work. Contact Aaron Hatcher, 45 St Helens Gdns, W10 6LN.

Spare Rib badly needs a book-keeper with time and no need of money to keep our accounts books together. Experience up to trial balance stage would help. Please contact Rose Aides in writing.

FOR SALE

Send SPARE RIB CARDS with women's centres listed on back. Pack of 10 with envelopes 40p from Sandra Oliver, 9 Northumberland Ave., London E12 5HF, or from Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh St., W1.



The Women's Trade Union Conference was held, as is customary, in March this year, in a dance hall at the end of the pier in Hastings. The hall was arranged in rows of numbered seats for delegates and, up on the stage, the table for the conference Chairman and other members of the Women's Advisory Committee and guests.

How the Women's TUC is Set Up

To speak, delegates come up to a raised microphone and stand facing the hall. Seven weeks before the conference, all unions must have sent in their motions (limited to two each), which are printed and circulated, and followed by the submission of amendments.

When a delegate wishes to speak in presenting a motion to the conference, she indicates this to the Chairman and is allowed 10 minutes. After her, each other speaker is allowed 5 minutes. Voting on the motions and amendments is then by voice or show of hands, and the conference moves on

to the next topic.

Unions with less than 10,000 women members are allowed 2 delegates and, for every 5,000 women members over that, they are allowed one additional delegate, up to a maximum of 12.

Differences between the Women's TUC and Women's Liberation Conferences For women used to women's liberation conferences, the Women's TUC asserts a more bound and weighty atmosphere, but there is an inspiring, unhesitating solidarity amongst the women. As a conference which is a part of the labour movement, this is combined with an unafraid common purpose with men. There is relief in the way its traditional democratic rules for procedure head their way through motion after motion, to take an enormous number of decisions about an enormous number of subjects while accounting for many points of view.

But a comparison with a women's liberation conference

is not simple. Our purpose, in what can appear to critics as a higgledy piggledy organisation, is to use the workshops to prevent a top heavy organisation lumbering past problems or ideas women may be unsure of voicing. We wish to avoid a form of organisation which controls and submerges us, and use small groups as the best way to concentrate on finding out all the particulars in situations on which to base our decisions.

Yet we still find ourselves anxious about domination of our conferences by sectarian groups or annoyed about allowing lengthy individual interventions in workshops if they only waste everyone's time.

Abortion

This year, women's issues which have been ignored by the TUC Women's Conferences in the past could remain buried no longer. Abortion has become even more urgent and there was obvious concern amongst delegates. But the platform (Marie Patterson, who was Chairman, and some members

of the Advisory Committee) was opposed to the abortion debate developing, and a delegate trying to raise it on the first day of the conference was given a sound ticking off.

The TUC women's charter leaves abortion out of its 12 aims for working women. The Chairman used her power to decide in what order motions will be discussed to call the abortion and contraception amendments first thing on the morning of the second day. Following the motion to "allocate a more realistic proportion of the national budget to the NHS", Dr Berry Beaumont from the Medical Practitioners' Union (ASTMS) was to propose an amendment to this, calling for the extension of contraception facilities and abortion on demand. But Dr Beaumont had not yet arrived back from London. Despite being asked to withdraw the amendment, the second MPU delegate, Judith Gray, went up to the microphone and spoke without any prepared notes. She was followed by Judith Hunt, the new TASS women's officer,

who, in saying that more money must become available for research into birth control because the pill did not suit all women, said that the women's TUC "must not lag behind the women's liberation movement". The conference voted overwhelmingly in favour of the amendments.

Connections between Different Proposals

The conference constantly drew out the connections between different proposals. A motion by the Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union called for "immediate action to bring help and encouragement to battered wives throughout the country", which was the first time the conference has acknowledged this. Two of the trade unionists who spoke were also involved in women's aid groups in Dundee and Lancaster and one pointed out that a battered woman could be "married, cohabitee or single and maybe even an older woman beaten by her sons". But, whatever her position, the local authority denies the woman legal aid if she leaves home but is left with "no fixed address" and so she is back into "the trials and tribulations of being a one-parent family which we have already heard about this morning."

The situation of one-parent families was also mentioned in resolutions for the expansion of child care facilities. It was important, said one delegate, that with redundancy threats, "If a woman loses her job, she must not lose her child's position in the nursery." The conference called for 18 weeks maternity leave, and the right to return to work up to a year after the birth of a child, for both the mother and the father.

Many details were given to emphasise the complex problems women had over equal pay and equal pensions. Christine Page of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers spoke on the motion calling for the Labour Party to change the wording of the Equal Pay Act to "equal pay for work of equal value", while the National and Local Government Officers' Association delegate warned that nominal equal pay in the public service had not meant less discrimination against

women at work. And the delegate from the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers said that although women agricultural workers could be graded as skilled craftswomen, they were still not receiving equal pay with skilled craftsmen because they could not work the full hours required for it and had to go home to look after children. In arguing for more action to improve conditions of women who work at home for miserly pay, another delegate said that sweated labour could not be dealt with in isolation from the problems of part-time women workers nor from the demand for more nursery provision.

While the conference made links between economic and social aspects of women's lives and took some of them, for the first time, as serious politics, it was obvious there would be much against women carrying out practical changes. Linda Smith, of Southwark Trades Council, warned that economic cutbacks threatened "the freedom of women to work and live as they choose", and Bell Huffinley of Leeds Trades Council echoed many other delegates when she said, "The social contract is being used solely to keep wages down and not at all for the things we have been talking about the last two days."

The TUC Women's Conference has existed for 44 years, although it does not have the policy-making power of the male-dominated Trades Union Congress held later in the year. In support for the continuation of the separate women's conference, Jessie Stephens, who has been an active feminist socialist since before the first World War (interviewed in *Spare Rib* 32), gave a moving retiring speech. She said that, there were 84 women (representing 30 unions) out of 1,030 delegates at the 1974 Trades Union Congress: "Does that look as if we are going to get some sort of recognition?" Yet this was an increase on the 52 women representing 26 unions in 1972. Also, she said, the trend for these women delegates to come from white collar unions was being reversed and more than half of the women at the 1974 TUC were from manual unions. □

Marsha Rowe

NUPE GAY GROUP FORMS

The National Union of Public Employees Gay Group writes: We have recently formed a Gay Group for members of the National Union of Public Employees with the principal aim of campaigning to end discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the employment field; to bring together homosexual or bisexual men and women who are members of NUPE; and to assist any member of NUPE who feels that he/she is being discriminated against/victimised by his/her employer, or for that matter by the Union on the grounds of his/her sexual orientation.

There are over 500,000 members of NUPE in Great Britain, two-thirds of whom are women. So using the minimum accepted ratio of one in twenty, it produces a formidable gay NUPE membership of a minimum of 25,000 men and women in Great Britain.

Most NUPE members are of a working class background, and as a result would find it exceptionally difficult to make their homosexuality known to their friends and colleagues, let alone to their employers and/or Union.

The TUC has sent to all its affiliated organisations a model clause on equal opportunities in employment which it hopes unions will seek to get included in all relevant agreements with employers. In this model clause there is a section devoted to promote equal opportunity in employment regardless of workers' sex, marital status, creed, colour, race or ethnic origins. There is no mention of 'sexual orientation' in this clause. We are campaigning, as with other Gay Trade Union Groups, to get the TUC to include 'sexual orientation' in this section of the equal opportunity clause.

Unfortunately, despite the estimated minimum figure of 25,000 homosexual members of NUPE, Assistant General Secretary Bernard Dix has refused to allow any publicity for the Gay Group to be included in the Union journal, *Public Employee*, as he states that "it has never been the

policy of the Union to assist in the formation of separate groups within the Union; whether such groups be based on sexual, political, religious, ethnic, philosophical, behavioural or other grounds." As you may have seen, *Public Service*, the Nalگو journal, has given extensive coverage to the Nalگو Gay Group in recent issues. However, we are intending to use the Union machinery in the usual democratic way to try and correct this decision in the near future.

If anybody is interested in contacting the NUPE Gay Group, they may do so by contacting Lilian Lishman at 9 Edward Place, Newcastle, or by phoning 01-727 9613. □

RAPE LEGALISED?

With their customary medieval and vicious sexism, the Law Lords have decided that men can decide when women can be raped. Though a woman struggles against being raped it has been decided that if a man honestly believes that she wants sex he cannot be convicted for raping her, "however unreasonable his belief".

This astounding legal precedent will grotesquely increase the torment, already enormous, of women trying to bring rape charges against men. The prosecution will have to prove that a man could not have believed the woman wanted sex, but her statements about it are not what counts.

There is no comparable situation in law where one person can violate the stated wishes of another "sane" adult person, by glibly saying they didn't think that person knew what he or she really wanted.

Though we are critical of the whole judicial procedure, which usually amounts to little more than a protection of existing social inequalities, the total contempt for women's rights expressed by this ruling amounts to a condonement, almost encouragement, of the crimes of force and violence committed against women daily.

WHY don't we go and shoot Lord Hailsham? I honestly do believe, however unreasonably, that this is what he really wants. □

Lynne Segal

"Viva la Huelga! Abajo los Teamsters! Viva la Union de los Campesinos y Cesar Chavez! Viva!" The words of Marta Rodriguez, an 18 year old Mexican-American, member of the United Farm Workers Union and now a striker at the Guimarra Grape Vineyards in Delano, California.

Marta, from a family of migrant farmworkers, has worked in the grapefields since she was 6 years old, travelling the hundreds of miles from the Mexican border towards northern California, following the grape harvest.

She joined UFW along with the other eight members of her family in 1970. After four years of strike and an international boycott of non-union table grapes from California, the UFW had won contracts for 80,000 workers in over 100 grape ranches in south-west America. Marta worked for three years under a union contract. For the first time she had basic protections, such as minimum wage, seniority in hiring, health and safety benefits — paid for by the growers and by union dues — and also protection from dangerous pesticides.

In 1973 Marta and thousands of others went out on strike again, because growers had signed backdoor "sweetheart" contracts with the corrupt Teamsters Union and refused to renegotiate with the UFW. The Teamsters never held elections or allowed any farmworker participation in their agreements with the growers. They set farmworker labour history back 50 years. In an unofficial election conducted by Congress people, clergymen and civic leaders, the workers voted overwhelmingly for the UFW and Cesar Chavez, and against the Teamsters. Still their voices were ignored.

But the strike of 1973 was even more brutal than before. In addition to the growers, the California state police and reactionary courts, the strikers faced a more violent enemy in the Teamsters. Thugs, many with long criminal records, were paid 67 dollars a day to break the strike. They harassed pickets with guns and clubs, while growers sprayed the picket lines with pesticides from small planes overhead.

When the Teamsters failed,

Farmworkers: Why we Boycott

Why do American farmworkers strike?

They are not covered by any federal labour protection laws. They have no legal right to organise and bargain through a trade union.

Over a quarter of the farm labour force consists of children under 16. It is common to see children of 5 or 6 in the fields. Farmworker children often attend as many as 30 schools before they are 14. They have the highest school dropout rate in the nation.

Average wage for a farmworker family of four (all working) is £2,500 a year. The US government estimates the minimal annual income for a family of four is 11,000 dollars.

Life expectancy for farmworkers is 49 years. The national average is 72 years. Tuberculosis is the greatest killer of farmworkers.

Infant mortality rate, death in childbirth, and incidence of pneumonia, TB and malnutrition are all over 200% the national average.

Four out of five farmworkers suffer from symptoms of exposure to pesticides.

They are excluded from unemployment and sickness benefits, insurance, old age pensions, etc.

Facts from US Senate Study — 1969 Report of the Committee on Labour and Public Welfare, Subcommittee on Migratory Labour.

the police were called in and mass arrests made — over 6,000 from June to August 1973. Strikers who resisted arrest were attacked even more violently by the police. Marta explains, "I was still screaming when the first sheriff nabbed me. The first one pulled my arms back until I thought they would break. I was screaming and then the same sheriff hit me in the knees causing me to fall. Then there were two more sheriffs hitting me. One of them hit me with his stick in my side. I could barely breathe. They were pulling at me so hard."

Dora Mendez, aged 57 years, had to have six stitches. She says, "Before I knew it, one of

the sheriffs knocked me on the back of the head. I went down and felt faint. I actually passed out for a while and when I came round again I was still on the ground. The sheriff kicked me twice while I was down. He told me to stay there while I was lying face down, handcuffed. I was still groggy when they took me to jail."

In August 1973 the violence reached a peak. Two of the strikers, Nagi Daifullah, a young Arab worker, and Juan de la Cruz, a 65 year old Mexican worker, were killed by a Kern County sheriff with Teamster Union scabs. 6,000 mourners marched through the grapefields.

To avoid further deaths and

violence, a decision was made to call off the picket lines, but not the strike. The UFW emphasised an earlier tactic — the nationwide boycott of non-UFW grapes. Trade unionists, students, religious groups, housewives' associations and others offered their support. 1,000 farmworkers volunteered to travel across the US for 5 dollars a week to organise the boycott.

This has been extremely successful. Within the US, sales are down more than 40%, wholesale prices have been cut by half, and more than twice as many grapes as usual have been put in cold storage or turned into wine or raisins. The last desperate attempt of the growers has been to try to export more than twice as many grapes.

Britain is the largest overseas importer, and so, as it did during the first international boycott in 1969, the union is calling on all British workers and consumers to support the boycott. TGWU dockers and market porters have agreed not to unload the grapes, and blockade them when they can. But because of the increase in refrigerated containerisation, it is difficult to spot the grapes, and they often pass straight through the docks to the supermarket warehouses.

Please support the boycott. Tell everyone not to buy California grapes. Tell your store manager not to order them for next season and why. Write letters to the UFW (La Paz, Keene, Cal. 93531, USA) expressing your support. Write to the growers (California Grape and Dried Fruit League, 717 Market St., SF, Cal. 94103, USA) telling them you will not eat grapes until they sign a UFW contract. Boycott Safeway Stores: those in England are 92% owned by American Safeway, the largest chain store in the US and totally owned by agribusiness growers (Shell Oil, Bank of America, Tenneco, etc.).

Elaine Elinson

Elaine Elinson, UFW representative in Britain, is willing to speak at meetings and show a film on the strike — *Why We Boycott*. Contact Elaine at UFW, 29 Gt. James St., London WC1 (01-242 6440). Books and leaflets available, and contributions very welcome.

Info..Odds & Sods..Advice

Rape

In recent conversations a friend of mine repeated to me many of the clichés about the sort of woman who becomes a rape victim, which are so destructive to a woman's self respect. He was in fact defending a rapist acquaintance of his, a very disturbed young man. You can imagine the sort of things that were said — Rape victims lure men on with seductive behaviour and only cry "Rape" after the act. Women are victimised because they fail to avoid situations which leave them vulnerable etc.

I would like to counter this man's ideas with something other than opinions and scorn. I think it is very important to do so because he is an ordained deacon who hopes someday to become a priest actively involved in social work. I shudder to think what damage he might someday be able to do if his ideas remain uncorrected. Can you suggest anything he (or I) might read on the subject of rape?

Thank you in anticipation,
Sincerely
Monica Barnes

* See Judy Gilley's article in *New Society*, June 27 1974. Highly recommended reading. The rape crisis research group which I mentioned in issue 34 is still meeting and their meetings are now held at *Up Against the Law*, 66 York Way, London N1, on alternate Wednesdays at 7.30. Their next meeting will be on June 4th, and anyone interested is welcome. They are in the process of looking for a place to set up a rape crisis centre. There will also be a conference on rape for people interested in working in rape crisis centres. It will be held on May 31st in London but there are a limited number of places — about 50, because it is intended to keep it a small intensive session. Contact Jenny Mackenzie at 01-359 5900 for details.

Prostitution

I am about to embark upon a project on the subject of prostitution, but I am finding it very difficult to lay my hands on literature and information on this subject which is written from a feminist standpoint. If anyone can help me with this I would be very grateful. Perhaps there are others who are also studying this particular subject and if so I would be very

pleased to hear from them.

Yours

Jenny Payne
23 Percival Road
Enfield
Middlesex

* See *Spare Rib* 34, Felicity Crowther's article on Prostitution and the Law. Also Kate Millet's *Prostitution Papers*, published by Paladin and obtainable from Compendium, and R.A.P.'s report on The Street Offences Act which you can obtain from R.A.P. at Eastbourne House, Bullards Place, London E2. A book which presents a stimulating investigation into the lives of a group of prostitutes is *Prostitutes* by Denise Winn, published by Hutchinson at £2.25 (see *Spare Rib* 24 for review).

Maternal Deprivation

If by chance you could recommend any books or articles or sources of information on maternal deprivation and about the effects if any on children whose mothers go out to work, I would be very grateful. I have not come across much information in psychology texts about differences in development, behaviour, etc., between children of home mothers and children of working mothers, which is a subject I'm interested in. Thank you.
Yours sincerely
Helen Amos

* The best book we can recommend from a scientific standpoint is *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed*, by Michael Rutter, published by Penguin. In addition there are a number of useful articles written by women within the movement on this subject. See Lee Comer's pamphlet *The Myth of Motherhood* (Spokesman 12p), and an article by Sue Sharpe in *The Body Politic* (Stage One, 21 Theobalds Road, London WC1), called 'The Role of the Nuclear Family in the Oppression of Women'. Some of the articles on the family in Feminist Books' new publication *Conditions of Illusion* might also be useful. The Women in Education Newsletter sometimes publishes articles which relate to this topic too. Their address is 107 Egerton Road, Fallowfield, Manchester 14.

Lesbian Clubs

Would you please let me have

any names and addresses of clubs, etc., for female homosexuals that I might be able to join.

Yours faithfully
Ms R E Skeet
Cambridge

* Contact the Lesbian Collective c/o 4 Manor Park Road, Glossop, Derbyshire. They have produced a lesbian survival kit, a guide for women coming out in society as lesbians. It covers the N.E. of England but nevertheless you may find it useful. Contact Icebreakers too at 01-274 9590. Homosexual men and women can ring every evening between 7.30 and 10.30 to talk over their problems with other gay people. The address of Cambridge Women's Liberation is 48 Eden Street, Cambridge (Tel. 63886).

Bisexuality and marriage

I am engaged in a research project and need help. With the new honesty about sexual matters that is happily strengthening it is becoming obvious that many people have been married before becoming aware of their true sexual orientation. With the growing awareness that one's marriage partner does not truly turn one on and that one's inclinations are towards one's own sex, problems arise within the marriage and compromises must be made.

I should be grateful to hear from people who have found themselves lesbian or gay, and married, as well as those who are bisexual though with a bias towards their own sex.

Anything written to or told me will be treated in the strictest confidence, but my research is slowing down due to a shortage of informants. I feel I am doing something worthwhile which may prove ultimately helpful and hope that some people reading this will feel inclined to contact me.

I would be grateful to hear how you have confronted these problems and possibly solved them. Please contact me and let me talk to you, or write — even anonymously — so that I can emerge from the impasse I appear to have reached.

Reva Brown
32 Bell Lane
London NW4

Women and their Bodies

I am at present engaged on a thesis involving women and

gynaecological events throughout their lives. I feel that self education by women about their bodies has been sadly lacking possibly due to the power yielded by the medical profession.

My specific areas of interest are:

- 1) How women come to learn of psychosexual trauma or events — menstruation, menarche, menopause, pregnancy, obstetrics, etc.
- 2) How myths surrounding the above events have been perpetrated and by whom.
- 3) Self help (medical) for women.

I do not have access to any of your past copies and wonder if you have anything of special interest with respect to the above.

Peter McAuley
Dept. Community Medicine
Stopford Medical School
Oxford Road
Manchester 21

* It is probably more helpful to you if we point out areas where these topics have been more widely covered. *Our Bodies Ourselves* by the Boston Women's Health Collective covers every aspect of health care for women, and the material is presented warmly and directly. It includes discussion on such subjects as the power and role of male doctors, the profit motive in health care, the capitalist theory of disease causation, doctor patient relationships, etc. Despite the fact that it is a book produced by women in America, there is much of it that is relevant to the situation in this country. It costs £1.50 and can be obtained from Compendium, 240 Camden High Street, London NW1, and Rising Free, 197 Kings Cross Road, London WC1. There is also an interesting little pamphlet which might be of value called *Witches, Midwives and Nurses, A History of Women Healers* by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English. You can obtain this from Compendium too. For information about self help in this country, write to Nancy McKeith c/o Feminist Books, PO Box HP5, Leeds LS6 1LN.

Correction: Open meetings are held on the first Sunday of every month at Essex Road Women's Centre (not the 1st of every month as it appeared in last issue).

VALIUM
ROCHE
FOR
PRISONERS
OF THE
SOCIETY
OF
STRESS

VALIUM ROCHE RELAXES MIND AND BODY

Registered trade mark for preparations containing
chlorazepate, 7-chloro-5-methyl-1-methyl-5H-1,4-
benzodiazepine-2-one (Valium Roche)

VALIUM

A look at the most popular tranquilliser on the market.

by David Widgery

"The working class of Manchester can do nothing about their ailments or are compelled to call in cheap charlatans, and use quack remedies, which do more harm than good. An immense number of such quacks thrive in every English town, securing their clientele among the poor by means of advertisements, posters and other such devices. Besides these vast quantities of patent medicines are sold, for all conceivable ailments; Morrison's Pills, Parr's Life Pills, Dr Mainwaring's Pills, and a thousand other pills, essences, and balsams, all of which have the property of curing all the ills that flesh is heir to. The result of all these influences is a general emfeeblement of frame. Nearly all the takers suffer from indigestion and consequently from a more or less hypochondriac, melancholy, irritable, nervous condition." Fredrick Engels, *The Condition of the English Working Class*, 1845.

"But, I say! he went on, 'You do look glum! What you need is a gramme of SOMA.' Diving into his right hand trouser pocket, Benito produced a vial. 'One cubic centimetre cures ten gloomy ... But I say!' Bernard turned and rushed away. Benito stared after him. 'What can be the matter with that fellow?' he wondered, and, shaking his head, decided that the story about the alcohol having been put in the poor man's blood-surrogate must be true. 'Touched his brain, I suppose.' He put away the SOMA bottle, and taking out a packet of sex hormone chewing-gum, stuffed a plug into his cheek and walked slowly towards the hangars, ruminating." Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1932.

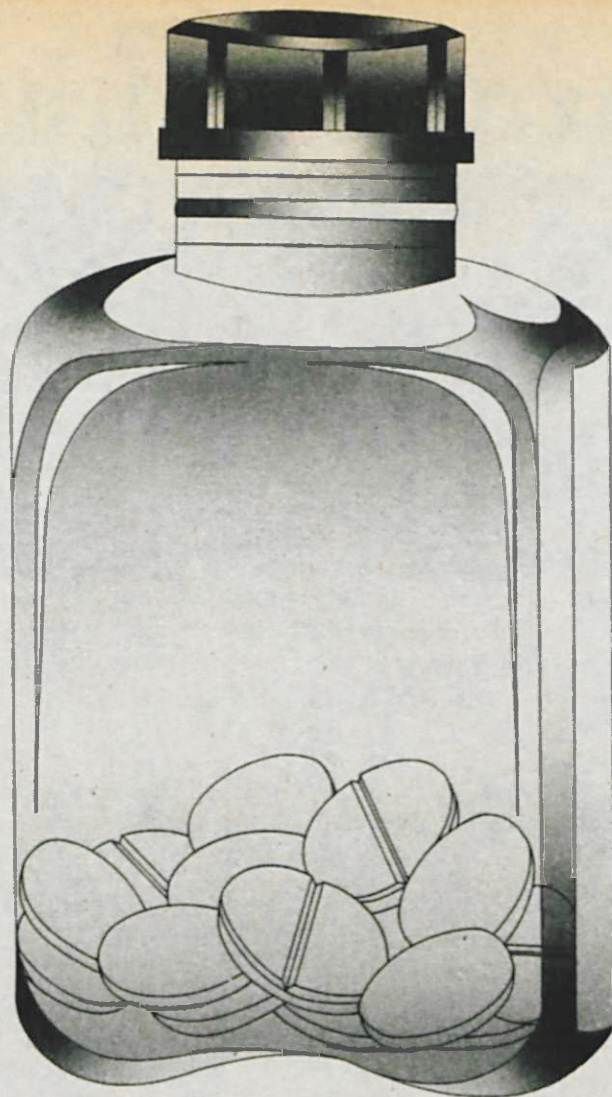
The annual number of prescriptions for tranquillisers and sedatives in England and Wales increased by 60% between 1965 and 1970. By the end of the sixties, 17.2 million prescriptions for these drugs were made each year by GPs. A recent survey of the international use of tranquillisers found that in European capitals an average of one in every six people interviewed at random had taken tranquillisers more than once in the previous year. 70% of the pills were swallowed by women.

It is hard to grasp the sheer scale of it. 17.2 million prescriptions probably means 350 million separate tablets, which means ten pills for every adult in Britain per year. It means the reader of this article who does not take tranquillisers or who does not

know someone who does, is exceptional. At the present rate of prescription, in five years time the majority of the adult population will be taking mood altering drugs on a regular basis, requiring greater and greater dosages to achieve the same effect. And their effect is somewhere between the numbing produced by laudanum-based cordials used by 19th century women to douse the pain of the slums and overwhelm their children's hunger pains with sleep, and SOMA, the compulsory relaxant which was issued in Huxley's horrific brave new socially engineered world.

The drug Valium and the multi-national pharmaceutical company who produce it, Roche Ltd., dominates the tranquilliser market. They more than anyone else have achieved the drug salesman's dream; they have hooked a whole population. Roche's three main products were successfully introduced, with very skillful publicity, as the tranquilliser boom took off in the early sixties. Librium was launched in 1960, Valium in 1963 and Mogadon in 1965. Doctors, worried about the risks of suicide and addiction to barbiturates, previously the main sedative, turned enthusiastically to a drug which had, and still has, a very good safety record. Roche geared their advertising in the medical press closely to the kind of complaints most GPs face but don't know how to cope with: the neuroses of modern capitalism, the unexplained headaches, the sudden bout of depression, that outburst of ill temper. Their favourite word is stress; 'Valium for the prisoners of the society of stress' was an early slogan. The ads show distraught housewives despairing in supermarkets, commuters staring blankly at each other in the tube train; 'Valium helps your patient to enjoy his work. Formerly nervous and tense, he takes a greater interest in his job and is better able to meet and solve daily problems.' Valium's successor, Nobrium, is now advertised on its ability to douse people's anxiety while still keeping them hard at work; 'Most people who need tranquillisers also need to work or run a home, so they should remain alert.'

Great emphasis was laid on Valium's 'versatility'. Since it does nothing but numb, it can be used to numb practically anything from angina to ulcerative colitis, as a kind of Universal Remedy. And Valium was available in preparations which would shut up the young and the old when they became 'disturbed' or 'con-



Weston Lansdale

fused'. As a mother puts it: "They shut us up in our isolated world and then when we suffer from 'neurotic symptoms' induced by them, they call it anxiety, tension, irritability, tell us there is nothing to be done — and pump us full of sedatives. Or if your toddler is difficult to handle (perhaps he's living with you in one room) Valium Roche recommend a smashing syrup — they say it effectively controls anxiety in children — in fact it just dopes our kids."

The way Valium and similar minor tranquillisers affect the brain is only vaguely understood. Their action seems to have the temporary effect of damping down some of the biochemical circuits which produce the emotions and amplifying the screening and censoring functions of the mid-brain nerve centres which organise what is going on in the higher centres into what we do consciously. The way someone taking the pills most often describes the effect is 'numbing'. Many doctors see the preparation as just a medical version of a double scotch. But despite an outstanding safety record for such a widely used preparation, so little is really established about its precise mode of action, that Valium should still be viewed with caution. It may, for example, give temporary relief by burying tension at a deeper level. Many patients complain it interferes with sleep and dreaming. A recent *British Medical Journal* editorial has alerted doctors to outbursts of rage and hostility being triggered by the drug which have probably been going on, unnoticed and unreported like battered wives, simply because no-one has been looking for them. It doesn't need a great deal of common gump to predict that some tense patients handed out tranquillisers might react in the 'wrong' way. But clearly the doctors were generally happy with this conveniently multi-purpose elixir. And if the doctors were prescribing it, Roche were happy too. By 1970 the Swiss-based company commanded 88% of the British tranquilliser market, its turnover had passed £500 million and its £1 shares were valued at £23,000 on the London stock market.

The point is not that there has been a sinister big business conspiracy to drug women into submission. Rather Valium fills the space between the patient's desperation, the doctor's incomprehension and the health service's disintegration. The point is

not to abolish Valium but the system which gives rise to people's need for it. But Roche does provide an insight into the financial appetite and business ethics of the big pharmaceutical concerns who consume so much of the NHS budget and exert such leverage over every doctor's prescribing habits. More financial information has surfaced on Roche than on most of its rivals, facts which a Monopoly Commission report had to wring out of the firm's Swiss, Uruguayan and Canadian offices. The report found that the chemical costs of each kilo were £100. The pills were sold to the NHS at £1,962 a kilo. Even when allowing generous costs for 'research' (a good deal of it concerned with taking out patents on all Valium-like chemicals to keep their copyright well protected) and 'distribution' (mainly pestering GPs with adverts and educating them with lunches and free gifts), Roche still made £1,210 clear profit on each kilo. Using the Commission's extremely modest estimates, between 1966 and 1970, Roche embezzled £12,877,000 from the NHS, enough to build all of the 92 health centres with plans and sites ready whose construction was frozen in 1971. And when the Tory Government and the Monopolies Commission, very politely asked for some of it back, Dr. A.W. Jann, the medical businessman who controls Roche, refused point blank. He was backed up to the hilt by the Law Lords and the quality newspapers.

In a poetry contest sponsored by Roche and some other companies, the winning effort was written by Mr. A.V. Kinsey and called 'In Praise of the Medicine Makers'. In part it ran:

*Their bounty of capsules, tablets, potions and pills
Bring low the deadly bacteria and also many grievous ills.
A murrain on their enemies, the foxes
Who decry their honest profits from soap boxes.*

If more women taking Librium and Valium realised quite how much money was being made out of their misery, they might yet find their way to a soap box.□

(David Widgery studied medicine at the Royal Free Hospital and practices in London.)

Exercise in Trust



Patricia Wright



Lise Folkman

Anne Severson Patricia Wright

Continuing last month's exchange of letters between Penny (Patricia Wright) and Anne (Anne Severson). Penny begins on the list of exercises which Anne had suggested when they met and started the 'work' of therapy a few months before:—



Sept. 21

Anne, just wonderful to hear from you, your responses are just right. I'm very pleased you like the photograph of you. I do too. In fact I have a matte print of it by my (new! beautiful!) desk, and look at it on several different kinds of occasions: when sad and needing encouragement, when happy and wanting an additional hit, and by accident, which is probably best. Anyway, I want to talk a bit about why I put it up there, besides that I'm proud of it as a photograph. The other reason might embarrass you a bit. Though I doubt it, come to think of you. Last spring when I was taking the survey course on Japanese art, we saw a few very realistic portraits of masters, zen masters I think. They were some of my favorite things all quarter — very favorite in the painting tradition I think. They were made for a student to have near his study place, to flash on the master's teaching when necessary or desirable. Now I don't believe I'd ever call you 'master', just too big a word, too heavy for a human being. However as I'm sure you've noticed I take quite a bit of pleasure in thinking of you and referring to you as my teacher. (Before this sentence belongs a sentence that says it occurred to me I can think of Gerard M. Hopkins as master, at least if I giggle a little as I think it, only because he's dead. I hope it isn't also because he was a man.) Anyway, about the teacher thing. I've thought about the use of that word because I had to, or felt called upon to, explain it both to Nan and to Judy Fell. Both looked surprised and a little — what, alarmed, skeptical, disapproving, cynical, something in that constellation — when they heard me use the word. Judy said 'that sounds a little like . . . guru . . .' I wanted to explain that you didn't use that word about yourself, that you had talked about your teachers and I liked the word, an honest word to describe the relationship, particularly because all my life I've hated authority and resisted it, even when part of me was drawn to it and my mind knew it was legitimate. Like the humble posture exercise, it's good for me to practice submission, not a whiny submission but a strong willing one. Surrender. I think I talked about that when I was writing about sex. I know I think about it quite a bit.

On a night last week, I checked my breasts, it being the proper interval after my period — do you do that Anne? You should! — and found a no-kidding lump. I was terrified, I guess, except that I wasn't filled with terror or with anything else, it was quite the opposite, I was emptied in a rush, washed clean of trivia. I called my doctor and had it checked the next day, he thinks it's nothing to worry about and I prefer not to worry, at least about something that specific, that horrible, and that loaded. But it was quite an experience, I wish I could retain more of it. Two streams of apprehension, one of living in maimed flesh, how could I make love, sensing fully how narcissistic I am, the other stream the fear of death, certain death, known death, imminent death. I wasn't happy, as I am when I'm running clear *and* think I have another thirty or forty years to live, but I was, it ran me clear. Cleared by fear. When I got up the next morning after sleeping really pretty well I was calm and aware, my eyes in the mirror looked quiet and brown and rounder than usual. A couple of things to write washed through and onto paper. I knew what I knew again this morning. What does it do for me to dribble away my days with wounded pride and interminable internal speeches, what does it do to rehearse and rehearse the sad script of Judy's visit or to plot and plan future ones she may never make, what does it do, it does what the crossword puzzle does.



Sept. 22

Morning. Full mind. The business about pluck: I was thinking just now as I was putting up the shades and prepared to write about what you said about having courage, faith coming. You're so wise. I always thought I had to have faith first and finding that impossible to produce on command took refuge in inaction. Or cowardice. I am having more courage. I'm working on doing things, whatever I can do, right away. Connects with orderliness. But to the list of exercises you gave me. That connects with

orderliness too. I've put that off because I've written so erratically that I haven't had time or energy to put into it when I have written. I've been giving some thought to trying to discipline myself to schedule my time this winter. I think it will be necessary with three lecture classes and twenty hours on the magazine and six for the research project I do piece editing for. Or am supposed to be doing piece editing for. I think it will be necessary, just to keep me from getting confused, because I get confused rather easily.

Now what I will need to do is establish a daily time for writing, on whatever I have to work on, including the list. There is always something that needs working on in writing now. I finally realise that what I am is a writer. I've been thinking about the fact that I needed people to insist I write, I needed you to tell me about my strong response to the rest of the natural world, which I can't deny any longer is genuine and personal.

Yes, I tried, just now going through your letter again preparing to write, saying "I am a lover who has not found his thing to love" in several different voices* Funny game! I was very interested in what voices thought me to say. First one was a syrupy southern belle, sort of a grade B movie on the Gone with the Wind model. Then came men's voices, and they sounded much more likely: first a phoney-deep broadcasting voice, then an abortive attempt at Frederic Chopin (that didn't sound at all Polish, I'm not sure how Poles are supposed to sound, but it, the idea of all that tortured hair and rolling eyes and passion — poor Chopin what I'm doing to him! too many movies — seemed quite close. Then a sort of Latin lover, Ricardo Montalban voice that didn't do much. But then I tried it in Penny's voice, Patricia's voice! and you know it sounded best of all that way, it sounded just fine. But the thing is, I was thinking about it earlier, after I read your letter the first time, I was thinking that quote doesn't sound sad to me now. I mean, on the book there was this dark grainy cover photo of a hooker under a distant street lamp surrounded by black and you know that was a *sad* quote and I lapped it right up. But those dummies with their Bartlett's and dummy me, that's not a bad quote, necessarily. I am a lover, is *present tense*! I'm using a lot of exclamation points tonight. Feeling rather enthusiastic.

You are quite right, there was self pity there. I think it's dissolving. Yes I *pitied* Leola, that better be dealt with too. Your early-on point about pity being a power grab, I've thought of that many times. She was, is I hope, a wonderful woman.

You asked me what I'm going to begin with, on the list. (*Anne had asked Penny to examine herself on various topics*). I dug it out. It starts with *groups involved with, shames, blames, group situations, how handle, problems trying to solve, how crime*. Then sexual autobiography. Then *practice, beliefs, subjects, books, people, places*. Lotta work. I'll be at it soon. Yes the regular times is a good idea, I'd better start tomorrow.

I also am trying to push myself to take more emotional risks with people generally. I've let the simplest things be hard for me. I've volunteered to work on Women's Press and hope that works out well. It seems a nice way for me to approach the woman thing with something to offer, something I can do (trading skill), because I have so much to gain. I want to make new friends, that's unaccountably hard for me to say but I do, meet more gay women, be in and of the movement and not just for it.

Now. Your suggestion of a morning exercise. Bless you, it was wonderful. I wasn't sure what you meant, when I read it yesterday, by "hymn of praise". (I just turned on the radio when I went in to pet Tigger, and there's the Water Music.) I decided to take you literally and try to sing something. I woke at six this morning, then slept lightly for an hour, as I'm having a tendency to do with cool mornings and comfortable bed. After the first awakening I was aware of my assignment, and a little worried, not sure what to do.

I rolled on my back and looked at the light in what's becoming a lovely room, and began to sing. I was thinking last night about the posture of humiliation, remember, and the breathing in and breathing out, breathing in the power and breathing out the poison. So I sang, not too tunefully more of a chant, about breathing out the old air and breathing in the magic, breathing out self pity and breathing in the magic, thanking the magic that gives me my house, my mama and daddy the women who've loved me and nurtured me through the cold time, and you, and all the friends whose names were to say and the others whose faces passed smiling or serious before my eyes as I sang my song. I just realised Judy Fell wasn't there. I'm probably still feeling

too ego-pissed to feel properly grateful to her, though it's coming along, and she's done much for me. I sang until I was finished singing. Then I waited for a minute — oh I just remembered my song ended itself with some long round syllables that lasted until there was no more outward breath. It was wonderful and I could hear it with my outward ears. Then I waited a minute and sang a rousing and much more tuneful rendition of that thing you sing in church, the little thing at the end when it's over and you're going home to dinner in a minute, Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Then I sang a few bars of my song again, then got up and put my house in order. It was and is a beautiful morning, turning fall now but the sun warm on my back and still the feet naked in sandals.

Walking this morning, thinking a little about my song, your words came into my mind: "Give it all you've got." I think I did. I've got a lot. All the dearness of people and place, a magic provision, manna. I read an enjoyable article about paranoia. One researcher said he had discovered a category of folks he called positive paranoids, who were very happy: they believed the universe was a vast glad conspiracy designed to delight them. It does feel that way sometimes, doesn't it.

Perhaps, it would be possible to abandon oneself to pleasure, feel it fully, without being attached to it. Taking it all as it comes. Pleasure a womb that bears sorrow, sorrow a seed surrounded by joy.

Now. I wanted to talk a little or a lot about what's been happening the last few days.

Went to Portland Friday to do an interview and mostly just to get away once more before school buttons me down. I stopped to see Nan as I went through Elmira, and was briefly brought down by that, for interesting reasons. The night before, when I was out of town, there'd been a women's dance at Scarborough Faire with you guessed it Ruth Swartz. I had thought it was going to be Saturday night when I planned my trip, and had thought I might get myself together to try to stop in when I got back to town. I was disappointed but also relieved when I discovered I'd be gone. I had suggested to Nan that she go, and so had the therapist she's seeing. She pooh-poohed, saying she didn't dance, wouldn't know anyone, same things I'd say. Well when I got to the farm at five o'clock she was still in bed, hung over, having been to the dance and had a hell of a time. What precipitated it was this: Friday night she came over to feed Tigger and she got into my papers. She admitted that to me last night, which I thought was quite courageous. I can imagine doing something like that, but I can't imagine admitting it. Anyway she was so upset by what she found that she got drunk and went to the dance, so it all worked out for the best. She went on and on about it while I sat on the edge of her bed with wide eyes: it sounded incredible, wall to wall women, smoke, wine, screaming rock and roll and women going topless. I'd never have made it. After awhile I found myself getting kind of upset by it, and I left as soon as I could. A mile down the road I was feeling better and could analyse that reaction. It's a number of things. For one thing I react with some jealousy to her having a good time without me: miserable as it's made me to have Nan bitching around all summer about me leaving her, it's very flattering to be so needed. Also, jealousy that she'd gone into a kind of scene that's threatening to me and had a good time, that she'd made some contact with the lesbian community here before I did. One-up. I need to work on whether that kind of atmosphere, that whole bacchanalian thing is repellent to me because it's not my style or just because I'm afraid of it. That touches on another reason I started to get turned off to Nan's story: she was talking about dancing with a topless girl and doing a very "stompy pursuit" thing, as she put it; the look in her eyes and eyebrows and the way she was smiling was a way I always hated between us. I always thought of it as leering. I never told her that in those words, but I always withdrew from it, it seemed a very horny male style that doesn't attract me at all. I think that's sort of a matter of taste, temperament, and I never worried too much about it before I lived with Nan and felt her forcibly moderating it in herself because I didn't respond to it. Listening to that brought that back, and that conflict back. Macho women just don't please me personally.

Anyway by the time I got home I'd thought that through and was feeling good. And here was the letter from you and one from my mother, a warm friendly one too. The house looked beautiful and Tigger came crying over the back fence to meet me. And I'm finished writing for now.



Sept. 24

I had intended to write poetry for a few more nights before starting on the list, but am tired. I'm anxious too because the women's press meeting, my first one, is tomorrow night and I'm dreading it a little. I remembered early on in the list is stuff about groups. I thought maybe I'd start after all.

"List any groups involved in." Just list? Or rap? I'll rap. First group family, almost no others until school. Hid as much as possible first four years in school in three room school in country where as I told you before I spent a lot of time in the toilet. When I wasn't doing that I attempted to have one dependable friend to rely on. A Best Friend.

Only group experience I remember from that school is racing up and down the schoolyard with a herd of children screaming after a little boy named Gary Costley — aren't these names fantastic — who was sort of a friend of mine and who was being an apache chief, over and over we did this game day after day this charge AAAAAAAAA APACHE Gary would be screaming in the lead. (The little girls were assigned to be nurses. Indian nurses. I know.) One day I took the lead, screaming AAAAAAAAA APACHE myself. It was heady. Everyone followed, including the surpassed Gary. At the end of that charge he gathered us together. His little face was stern. He called for a vote, it was clear from his face it was important to him. I wasn't humiliated, for once, still basking in that unexpected impulse unexpectedly answered. Everyone voted obediently to follow him, and this is the kicker, so did I. I remember it clearly that moment, one of the few places in my childhood relatively that comes crystal clear. How I felt raising my hand, and Gary looking at me out of the corner of his eye, and twisting his mouth trying not to look pleased. I really believed it was the natural way boys and girls chiefs and nurses. It seems sort of sad now but it was sweet at the time sweet sweet surrender.

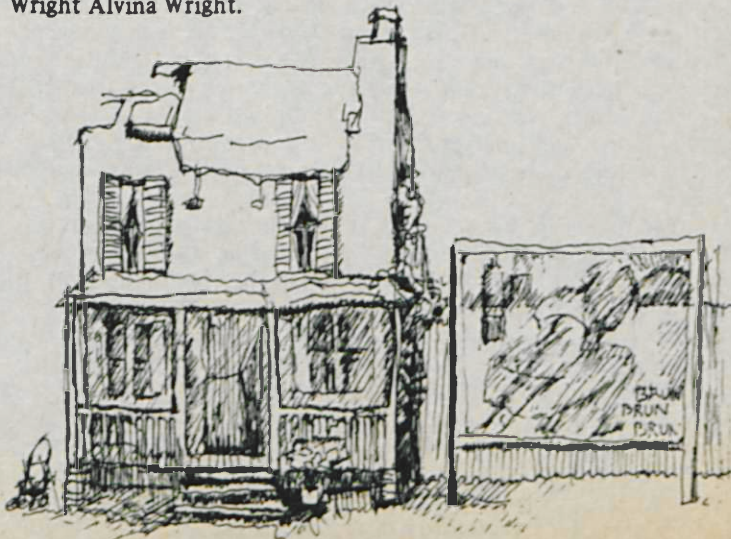
No other groups can remember at that school. Oh yes. Group thing. In the middle room, third, fourth grade, first terror of math. We competed in rows at the blackboard. I was slow I was stupid at math at least slow. The other children in the row caught in the competition over nothing, nothing, that the stupid teacher thought would make math relevant and I guess it did for those other little capitalist pig beasts hooting and screaming back there hurry hurry hurry I can smell the yellow chalk and the blank board the ugliest green in the world.

The apaches and the math drill group are only groups there. But I want to say one other thing about that time since I feel like I'm starting out on the story of my life with this list you've given me. I did a real rotten thing at that school. I beat up Richie Fackeral. There's another terrific name. The Fackerals were the resident poor white trash family. Garbage in the yard, rickety kids with no shoes and snot running into their mouths, the whole bit. Richie was my age, but a lot littler and I wasn't a big kid. He was very weak and frightened little boy and cried very easily. He upset me terribly because he was such a victim, so damn pitiful and whiny and wouldn't stand up for himself. I know it was because I could feel the little Richie Fackeral sniveling in me at all times, could feel his little, my little inner snotty nose dribbling down the insides of my ribs always. And one day I was just so overcome with my hatred for him that I fell on him in the schoolyard, knocked him down and sat on him and pounded him with my fists. He didn't resist, just cried and covered himself with his hands and arms as best he could. There was no colour to Richie, not much to his clothes which were very faded striped overalls that in warm weather he wore with no shirt at all and such thin little arms, but this was a cooler time the arms reaching were covered with tan shirt, his hair eyes freckles skin everything barely opaque and a variation on the colour of dusty mucus.

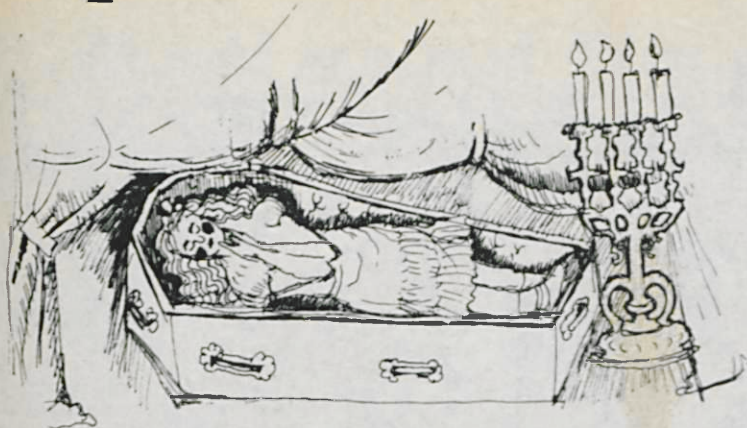
At the next school where we moved when I was in midfourth grade I met Richies bookend and there's an excuse for telling this dead baby story because it was a group involved in experience.

Somehow I managed to make friends or at least be allowed in my own mind to hang out with a group of little girls at the new school, I think there were about three. Never had I had such a group of friends. The only one I can remember at all was named Cheryl and was one of those doll-like children, super-pretty little girls with rich by the local standards parents whom everyone loves because they're so pretty. And from what I can remember she was a nice little girl too. I don't remember her saying anything, though she must have. I was so pleased to hang out with Cheryl and her friends, so proud. But then another little girl attached herself to "our" group. I remember her name now though I couldn't when I started writing, it was Alberta. An ugly name, I thought. Same genre as Richie, though less desperate. Pretty bad: I remember once seeing their house from the schoolbus when the door was open and the light was right, and you could see blue sky through the roof. But Alberta had shoes. I remember the shoes better than anything. Round blood brown shoes with plaid laces and crepe soles. Jesus I don't know why the laughter keeps rising in my throat as I write this — it did when I was writing about Richie too. I think its because it sounds like such a cartoon. Also Alberta had long skinny legs, was tall, and had a sort of bobbing, bouncing walk especially when she was pleased. And she was even more pleased than I was, or than I hoped I looked like I was, to be hanging out with the white folks. When we walked around the schoolyard she actually walked a pace or two behind, bobbing on those damn round shoes and smiling inanely. I just remembered that a few years later I went through a stage where I'd follow my sister all over the house right on her heels, bobbing, stopping when she stopped, and when she turned I'd make a face like an idiot. I almost drove her crazy. I did it because I wanted her to love me. I wouldn't want to be a child again for anything. Anyway Alberta drove me to distraction. Same projection trip obviously seeing my own pathetic insecurity and pleasure in her. I talked to the other little girls about ways to get rid of her — I did all the talking, much to their credit they reacted with distaste to my slimy plotting, they couldn't see that she was bothering anything. So finally I decided I was just going to have to do it myself. I took Alberta aside and told her the others and I had agreed she just wasn't our type. I remember I used those words, 'our type'. And of course I wiped that silly grin off her face and changed it for tears. I've felt time and again since that groups tend to bring out the worst and weakest and meanest in me, not of course because of anything in them but because I'm so damned insecure in them, feel so vulnerable, and am much more likely to attack.

I'd better stop for tonight, it's late. I'm glad I started, if only because I feel like a good girl. More than that though. I've told those stories before, though not so long and not so well. I always thought they were very sad stories, very ugly tragic stories. They don't sound that way now. They make sense. The children, the other children, are grown or dead — I can't imagine Richie making it but who knows maybe he's a happy motorcycle hood somewhere now — in any case farther from those scenes of pain, probably were farther from them in five minutes after they happened, than I've ever gotten. Like Alvina, who as you pointed out is grown up and if I know her, which I don't, is happy and probably married to that pig Roger, those children in my stories only exist now in me, in me, in me. Richie Wright, Alberta Wright Alvina Wright.



Sept. 25



I'd thought by this time tonight I'd be up to my ego in my first attempt at a group in years, but had a call from the woman I'd talked to earlier about Women's Press telling me the meeting would be tomorrow night instead. Telling me also that an important agenda item was discussing a collective statement on sexuality. Something about schisms in the local movement over lesbianism bisexuality and whether it's possible to be a feminist and still relate to men. I was a bit taken aback. Sounds interesting though I must say.

Also don't remember groups in Junior high, still oriented toward a few friends clung to like saving flotsam. Into crushes, one that had begun in grade school continued over several years painfully. Though of that when I visited home this summer, went over to the grade school looking for Kathleen's father who's the supt. Saw the green trees on the shady grass near the gym, remembered a playday at the end of sixth grade, lying on the grass looking up into the dapply leaves with that little girl. I don't ever remember so happy in all my childhood. In junior high I once told her an awful, awful in the sense of huge, lie to get her sympathy: said I'd had another older sister who'd died. It was quite heartbreaking the way I described it and how much I'd loved her, I brought tears to my own eyes with the performance. Huge lies all life have always been for that purpose so far as I can think now. Created a pregnancy and miscarriage when I was 21 that I almost came to believe myself; even my oldest best friend Judy believed it until I told her otherwise a year or two ago.

I think the freshman year of high school must have been the same, a floating groupless. I can't remember much about it either except the exposed feeling of not having anyone to eat lunch with sometimes or walk to the bus with. How horrible, as though one were a stray minnow, easy prey — for what? Who were my barracuda? But then things changed, I changed. Sophomore year or so. I was thinking about this earlier this evening. It seems to me you told me looking at my chart that my life had changed radically once before and you named a time in my teens and I thought and couldn't imagine what it had been. I think maybe this could have been the time? I'd have been 15 or so. I started joining things. That was easy to do in high school, all those things to join all set up. I was early conscious of the list of things joined after seniors names in the high school yearbook. I collected clubs like flowers, deader than that, like stamps, and I became a politician, ran for class offices, student body offices, club offices, student newspaper. I did all that I can hardly believe it now, for the shell of it, the role of it. I worked really very hard in high school doing all that. It was separate from being friends with people I think that's important. My personal friends weren't the people I was involved in all these joined things with, or only secondarily that. The joined things, I can't remember relating with people much, though I must have, to get their votes. Oh I can remember smiling in a way I still smile a grin that gets votes, for maybe the newspaper. I wanted just to achieve things. The outside of achieving things, the words, 'she has achieved that, and that, and that.' I was conscious of thinking I wanted my parents to be proud of me, be, do, something Karen hadn't but I think that was an excuse, I think I wanted me to be proud of me. I don't think it was my way because it dropped from me instantly like a burdensome cloak when I went to college.

Sept. 30

Just a few minutes now before I go to bed, to assuage my guilt over breaking my schedules before getting properly into them. I was terribly depressed for several days after the Women's Press meeting. At least I think that's what I was depressed about. Sometimes I think it's all a cover for something else. The thing didn't seem to bother me much at the time. I didn't enjoy it particularly, but it seemed more or less OK — strange, alien, but not upsetting. But for some reason the next morning and for the next couple of days I was so agitated, felt so foolish, confused. The out-of-it-ness I felt and was not surprised to feel replayed and replayed itself in my mind. I've tried to get into it, think about it. Seems less important now. But still. Could simply say I don't function well in groups — true enough, more than one other person and I start getting confused, feeling left out, feeling stupid and either called upon to produce impossibly or ignored. Don't know whether that's worth fighting, I can think of more agreeable ways to spend my time. On the other hand I sometimes feel the need of belonging to groups and often respect the productions of groups. But love and friendship: that's what I shouldn't be looking for in groups I think. And I think that's what I was after, strokes. I remembered I wrote, talking about high school groups, that personal relationships were quite separate. Maybe that's my mode. So, attempt to function in group only if it has some intrinsic value beside strokes. Will try a couple more meetings.

Nov. 25

Dear Penny, This last sheaf of writing is so terrific — I am really stunned by it. Fascinating it is, wonderful to read — it's as if you are reborn, a new person — recognisable but transformed. I have nothing immediately to reply — am tempted to just chat about my doings — but I will go through again page by paragraph for comments.

Now, To work. A new exercise — to do for two weeks and please record results, fuck-ups, successes. During this period of time make no excuses, offer no justifications, explanations for acts or thoughts. This means neither to others nor to yourself.

The recognition of Nan's courage — admitting she had examined your papers — Yes! Very good indeed.

"Macho women just don't please me personally." So you say. Examine this one a bit. Try out some heavy role playing in the privacy of your home. Stuff some toilet paper in the front of your jeans and stomp around talking tough to your cat. I think there's something worth uncovering here. "A very horny male style that doesn't attract me at all..." Hmmmmmm.

That last paragraph in which you theorise about your feelings relative to groups is loaded. The group trick is a simple one — yielding the personal identity to the creation of a larger whole. Some things are best done by groups, so you want to get this one together soon. As your sense of personal identity becomes more secure the necessity of releasing it, relaxing it, to participate in the formation of a new group identity will be easier. Remember your anecdote about the kid clique you were accepted by — a case of a group identity that surpassed, in your opinion, your own — and was thus, desirable. The time comes when the creation of a group identity is not a means for raising one's sense of self — but is a creative act. A group becomes a functioning organism — more than and different from the individual pieces it is composed of. I am eager to hear how it's going on in the Women's Press Meeting.

I think that's all. I guess you will have to send the writing airmail, otherwise it just takes too long to get back and forth. I am going to Newcastle today to do several days of film shows, seminars, etc. — then to Spain on Monday for two weeks — to meet my folks, I hope — they are notoriously unreliable about things like that. Anyway, I will be back here c. Dec. 13 and will hope to find something from you to read when I return.

Love kisses and a lot of big gold stars to you —
xxxxx, Anne

* Footnote

In last month's letters, Penny mentioned how she identified with this quote, which she found in a book of photographs. Anne suggested that she try saying it in various voices in front of a mirror.



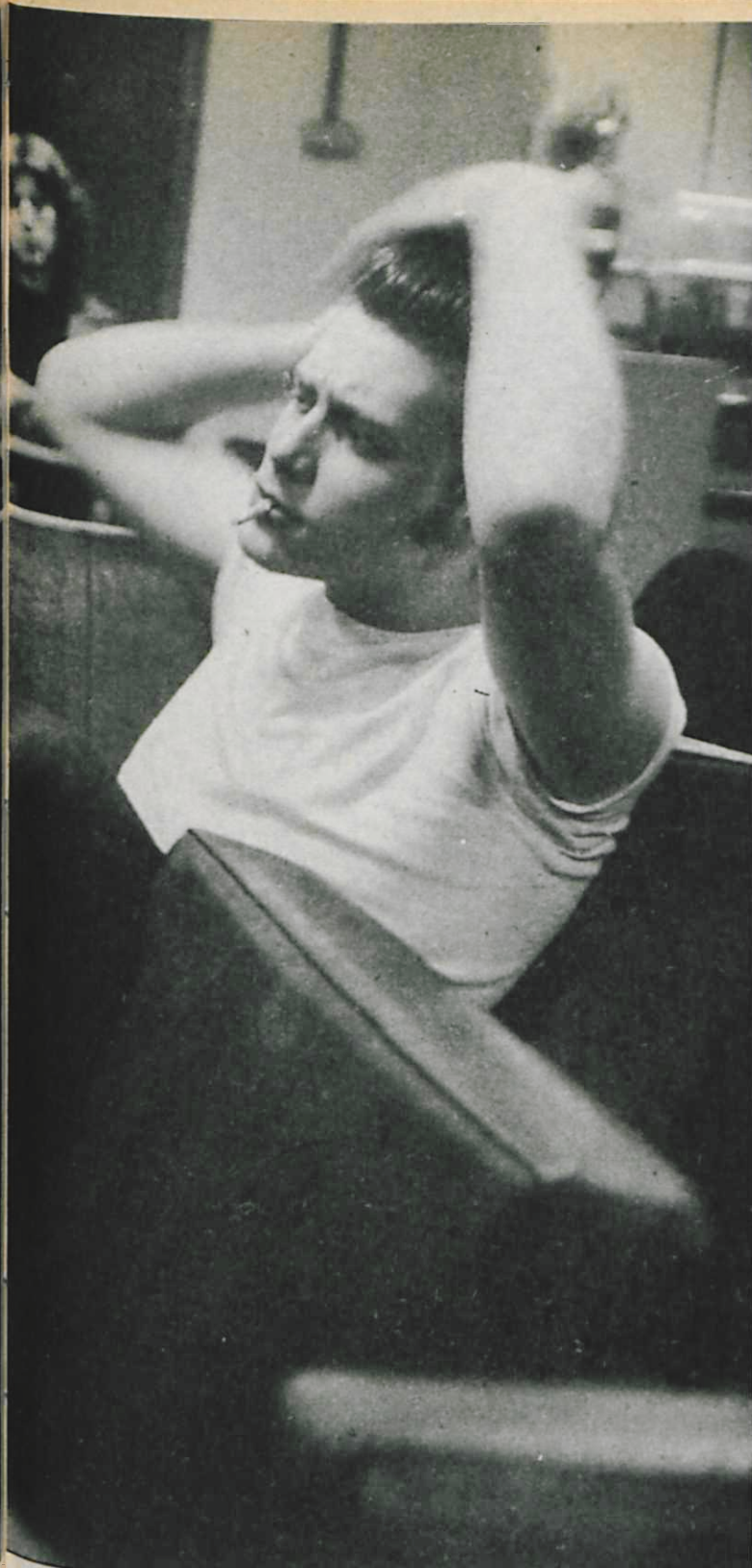
*'Rosie's Restaurant', Central School of Art –
Jessie Ann Mathew*

The photographs shown here are a small selection from the exhibition which includes work by Maggie Ellenby, Penny Eyles, Caroline Forbes, Sally Greenhill, Jessie Ann Mathews, Maggie Murray, Diane 'Hank' Olson, Angela Phillips, Toni Tye Walker, Angela Williams and Valerie Wilmer.

The exhibition is designed to tour. If you are interested in hiring it or if you'd like more details contact Julia Meadows, 27 Stepney Green, London E1. Tel: 01-790 7649.



Aylesbury v. Wycombe, January '75 – Penny Eyles



Young Business Executive – Angela Phillips

MEN

An exhibition of photographs taken by women

The most important fact about this exhibition is that it has a specific theme and is not a random collection of beautiful images. It is an attempt to show men's relationship to the world and especially to women.

It is the view of a group of women many of whom were involved in a similar exhibition on the theme *Women* in 1974. We saw this as a start and decided to try something which went further and made us do more than select from existing photographs.

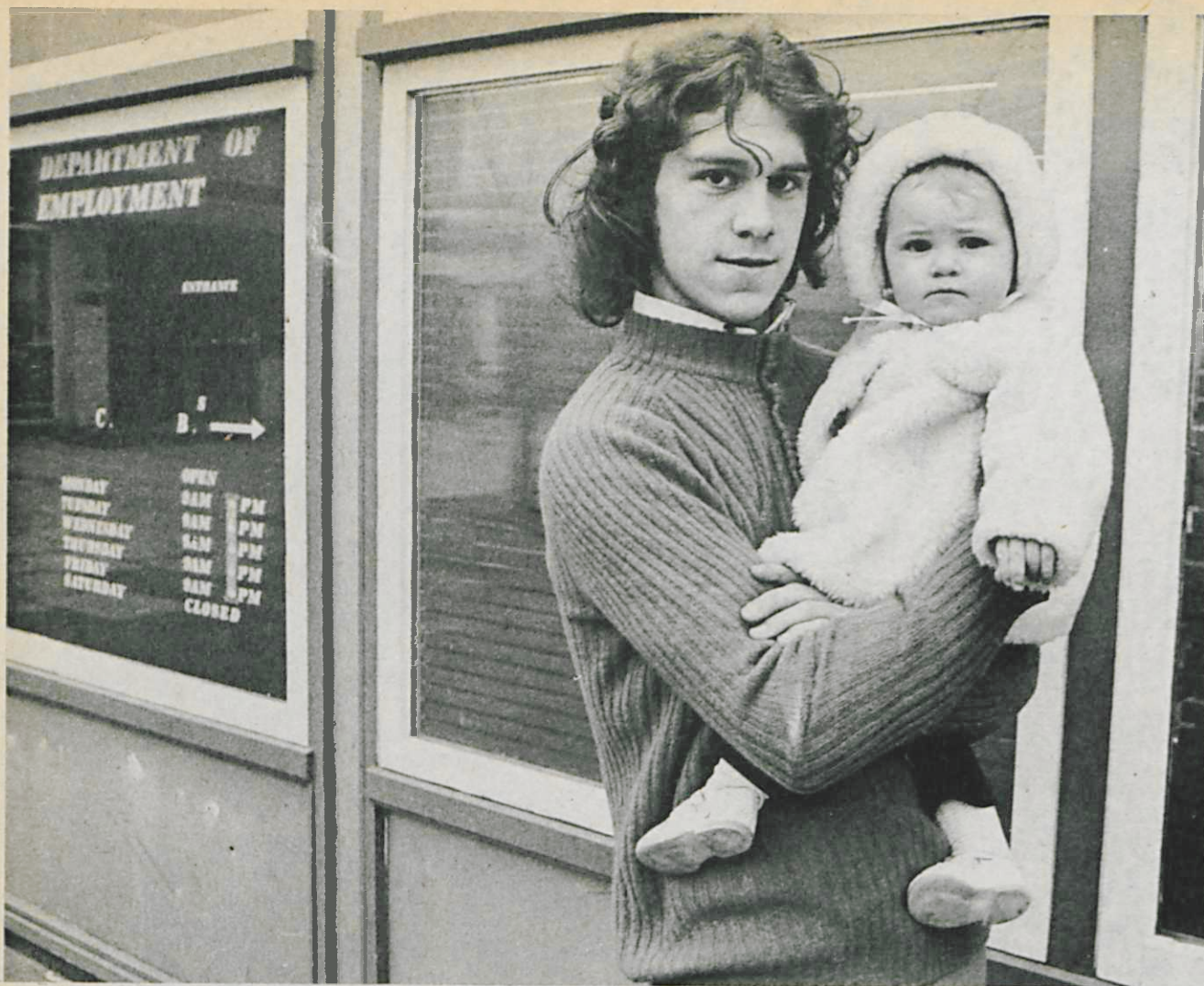
Our original aim was to show men as stereotypes in reflection of the way women have often been shown through photography. Group meetings modified this aim and the exhibition became a product of the discussions. For many of us the best part of the process has been the discipline of working together and taking pictures specifically for such a theme.

We are a mixed bunch, photographically and politically. But through meeting regularly we have discussed the political and social questions raised by the pictures. We have often had to re-assess what we want to say, and what we could say, through these photographs.

The exhibition is meant as a starting point for thought and discussion. It is by no means definitive and by no means unambiguous. We have not produced these images for other photographers, but for the people – other women and men.



Commuters – Sally Greenhill



'19 years old and never had a job.' — Angela Phillips



'A very male gesture, very expansive; a woman wouldn't do that.' — Diane 'Hank' Olson

BOOKS

What does it mean to be a woman?

Psychoanalysis and Women
ed. Jean Baker Miller
Penguin 75p

Psychology of Women. A Study
of Bio-Cultural Conflicts
Judith M. Bardwick
Harper & Row £3.25
(paperback)

Knowing Woman. A Feminine
Psychology
Irene Claremont de Castillejo
Harper & Row
(Colophon paperback)

The time has come now for us to extend our analyses of what it feels like to be a woman, what our situations, relationships, 'Demands', and struggles are, and for us to be asking ourselves what we are really like. What are the deeper sources for our inequalities, anxieties, jealousies and rage? What causes us to perpetuate them long after we have got them into some kind of social and political perspective? Why is it so hard to change? What does it mean to be a woman?

One of the most controversial subjects under discussion in some areas of the Women's Movement is the nature of female psychology and the roles of various factors in the understanding of that question: biology, socialisation, psychoanalysis, gestalt, consciousness raising, etc. The three books under review represent discreet approaches – in some ways they could not be more different, yet it is important to see them in relation to each other. The intensity of some of the disputes only makes sense in the light of some awareness of just how fundamental are the issues involved. For, it seems to me, they are rooted in questions of the very nature and direction of the Movement, of sexism (and especially the sources of female collusion and deference), of the meaning of feminism and its relation to socialism. They extend beyond the psychic processes of the individual to the wider processes of social relations, political systems and ideologies.

It has been the general tendency of the Left to regard the placing of much emphasis on the subjective or psychological life as unpolitical and indulgent – dismissively referred to as 'psychologism'. So-called 'personal' questions can be resolved into one's objective class position. This, ironically, reflects a similar division in the capitalist system itself: the increasing separation of public and private, work and home.

The linking of wider political oppression with oppression within the family – seeing the dynamics of intimate relations as a reflection of the structures of capitalism – has always been central in women's politics. A cardinal function of the family has come to be seen, as

Reich puts it, as that of "serving as a factory for authoritarian ideologies and conservative structures." We discovered, through examining our own experience, the truth of Reich's comment in *What is Class Consciousness?* that "the realities of capitalist social relations are immediately encountered on the more mundane levels of everyday life – that is, in the concrete problems of work, leisure, housing, family relations, neighbourhood life, and, of course, sexuality." The Movement has made explicit the forms of exploitation and alienation expressed in everyday living and relating – that a politics of intimacy and of personal change is inseparable from political change on a broader scale.

Psychoanalysis is the only well developed theory which might contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of the family in the individual's life and formation, the ways in which socialisation (in its most intimate and most general senses) deeply penetrates the individual psyche. Yet it has been widely dismissed. There are good reasons for this. The subject matter of psychoanalysis is the internal life of the family, yet it has no theory of how the family itself is socially determined. It tends to be abstracted from the issues of political economy. As it is often practised, it appears inseparable from a male dominated, authoritarian structure. It is elitist, inaccessible, and seems theoretically male chauvinist. It has more to do with adjustment and social conformity than with liberation and struggle. Psychoanalytic theory does not in itself invite us to change any of the structures which it so incisively analyses, nor is the issue that we should all become psychoanalysts (though some of us undoubtedly should), rather it is that we should understand the potential of psychoanalysis and turn it to our own purposes.

There is one important area which psychoanalysis seeks to understand and to analyse (and therein embraces the potential for change). From a very different perspective, Freud is saying something similar: "The past – the tradition of the race and its people – lives on in the ideology of the superego, and yields only slowly to the influences of the present and to new changes."

Detractors of Freud's theories on women as having no relevance for the present situation are not wrong to focus on the ahistorical distortions of his reactionary, and profoundly pessimistic, cultural philosophy. Explaining a comment of his that he had been "half converted" to Bolshevism, he said that he "had been informed that the advent of Bolshevism would result in some years of misery and chaos, and that these would be followed by universal peace, prosperity and happiness." Freud added: "I told him I believed the first half."

Yet to reject psychoanalysis altogether on these grounds is to preclude a serious examination of

its political significance before testing its radical and feminist potential. Psychoanalysis itself is not a monolithic structure. There are competing schools within even the orthodox tradition, and, more generally, it exemplifies a theory in process, subject to the sorts of revisions, changes and developments that were so characteristic of Freud's own work. Most importantly, it can provide a critique of itself in its own terms, and we should not be daunted by the fact that until now this aspect has been so little developed. The extent to which Freud himself remained unsure about his theories of female psychology is often forgotten. In his later papers he went back on some of his early pronouncements and admitted that the discussion of the early '20s had not proved very profitable. He advised against attributing any particular trait or characteristic with either masculinity or femininity – even activity and passivity – and suggested that, "If you want to know more about femininity, enquire of your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets, or wait until science can give you deeper or more coherent information."

Psychoanalysis and Women does more to correct (and in some cases perpetuate) misconceptions about psychoanalytic theories of female psychology than to engage very deeply with the more complex theoretical problems involved. Juliet Mitchell's more learned and very important book, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, attempts to do this from within the most orthodox psychoanalytic tradition, but is much less accessible.

The collection of articles in *Psychoanalysis and Women* is an important example not only of psychoanalysis in process, but of how it is possible to be critical of aspects of psychoanalysis without throwing out psychoanalysis as a whole. The book is interesting, and valuable as a necessary piece of ground-clearing, yet it is profoundly limited in the sense that many of the wider political issues remain at best implicit, and often altogether concealed. By 'ground-clearing' I mean that before the relevance of Freud for socialism and feminism can be appreciated, some of the more blatant shortcomings of orthodox theory have to be reconsidered even if this means, in turn, a rather one-sided emphasis, as in the present case.

This is the task of these papers – all of them by practising analysts, from contemporaries of Freud to the present day – and all written in relatively accessible language, not more or less technical, that is to say, than the paragraphs that follow in this review. Similar themes are reiterated by different authors: that "women's development is not autonomous but fashioned and moulded by existing male ideologies"; that penis envy, female masochism, narcissism, etc. should be seen not as merely biological but as social and cultural phenomena; that the psychology of women has

been considered primarily from a male point of view, and by masculine standards.

Much of the first part consists of a clear and persuasive attempt on the part of some of Freud's contemporaries (Karen Horney, Alfred Adler, Clara Thompson) to correct the male ('androcentric') bias (or what, at least, was thought to be a bias – for an alternative view see Juliet Mitchell) of his theories of female sexuality, and to combat the biological determinism (i.e. It's all inherited, and there's nothing we can do about it.) they were said to imply. Karen Horney emphasises the crucial point that the psychology of women had mainly been considered by men: "It is inevitable that the man's position of advantage should cause objective validity to be attributed to his subjective, affective relations to the woman . . ." She sets out to counteract what was taken to be the orthodox view that women's sense of being inferior or at a disadvantage was a rationalisation of her penis envy. She discovers in her case material that penis envy "operates as a factor of enormous dynamic power", but sees that factor, and the flight from womanhood, as stemming from the actual social subordination of women. How, moreover, can women find satisfying forms of sublimation when all the avenues, creative and professional, are closed?

In her second paper, Horney attempts to argue against some of the so-called orthodox views on female masochism. She points to how social conditioning has as yet not been considered from the psychoanalytic side, on the contrary, psychoanalysis "has lent its scientific tools to support the theory of a given kinship between masochism and female biology." She concedes that masochism is a prominent characteristic in female psychology, and that psychoanalysis frequently bears this out, but she attacks the view that it is psychobiologically necessary and that, as Helene Deutsch held, the swing to masochism was "part of the woman's anatomical destiny." Similarly with jealousy – to deduce the high incidence of jealousy in women from individual anatomical-physiological sources was not convincing. The economic, social and sexual insecurity of the woman had to be taken into account.

Adler's paper on sex is a more forceful expression of some of Horney's assumptions. He discusses sex in the context of his belief that: "All our institutions, our traditional attitudes, our laws, our morals, our customs, give evidence of the fact that they are determined and maintained by privileged males for the glory of male domination. These institutions reach out into the very nurseries . . ." Like Horney, he believes that a girl's inferiority "is forced on her by her environment", and that "so long as we cannot guarantee every woman an absolute equality with man, we cannot demand her com-

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plete reconciliation with the facts of our civilisation, and the forms of our social life." This is a perfect example, characteristic of the papers in this book, of making half the point very clearly. The weakness of the position lies, among other things, in the apparent absence of any explicit conception of a possible alternative form of social life, or realisation that to suggest female equality within the existing system was almost a contradiction in terms.

Clara Thompson also takes up primarily sociological weapons and complements Horney's battle against the determinism implied by penis envy. "The penis envy concept offers women an explanation for their feelings of inadequacy by referring it to an evidently irremediable cause. In the same way it offers the man a justification for his aggression towards her." She emphasises that the actual envy of the penis is not as important as what the penis represents symbolically: "The owner of this badge of power has special opportunities, while those without have more limited possibilities." She brings similar arguments persuasively to bear on the issue of female narcissism, concluding that since women have no security except in the love relationship, one may see women's alleged narcissism and greater need to be loved as a result of economic necessity as much as anything else.

Freida Fromm-Reichmann adds to Clara Thompson's analysis of women's conflicting role in her cultural situation a suggestion that the basis for the cultural depreciation of female sexuality lies in the "low esteem that procreation and natural female productivity has in our culture." Women depreciate their procreative organs and abilities, and consequently find dirty, bodily functions such as menstruation (the curse), glandular secretions, and discharge. (The importance of understanding and liking our bodies has only recently acquired any recognition — see, for example, *Getting Clear*, and *Our Bodies Ourselves*.)

Part II of this collection gives more emphasis to the specifically biological side: it begins with a long extract from Mary Jane Sherfey's book *The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality* based on anatomical, biochemical and physiological evidence. The article provides very clear descriptions of what exactly an orgasm is and how, physiologically, it is 'achieved'. This leads into a treatment of disturbance in sexual functioning stressing primarily the physical factors contributing to, e.g., frigidity. She provides immense amounts of physiological data to substantiate her notion of what she calls "women's inordinate sexual capacity" leading to such unexpected conclusions as "neither men nor women, but especially not women, are biologically built for the single-spouse, monogamous marital structure or for the prolonged adolescence which our society can now bestow upon both of

them." The rise of the patriarchal system involved the ruthless subjugation of female sexuality (including her entire emotional and intellectual life). While stressing the significance of hormonal influences on the sexual constitution, she is far from being biologically reductionist: these hormonal influences are in turn, she says, "very susceptible to all those uniquely human emotional, intellectual, imaginative, and cultural forces upon which psychoanalysis has cast so much light."

In his extended attack on aspects of Freudian orthodoxy Leon Salzman collects together and sets out much of the material which is scattered through the other articles. The writers in this section, as in the previous one, stress *both* biology and culture, particularly in relation to the changing roles and status of women (Judd Marmor) and in relation to actual case histories (Ruth Moulton).

The third part, both in the papers and in the editor's concluding article, brings the substance of the book nearer to the day to day experience of the individual, whether as 'patient' or as 'therapist'. There is a moving account by Alexandra Symonds of cases in which situations of particular emotional or psychological constraint led to acute phobias after marriage. She speaks of that small but significant number "who seem to shrivel up after getting married, who seem to lose all interest and involvements, who constrict their inner life, and who become depressed, anxious, and excessively dependent."

The last article by Lester A. Gelb, expressed some of the frustration that had been building up in me as I read the book. He makes the familiar analogy between discrimination on the basis of colour and on the basis of sex. Both white and black children "suffer the mental distortion that comes from destructive and dehumanising social practices and stereotypes. The same cause for mental distortion applies to the segregation and dehumanising of men and women . . ." He feels that psychoanalysis has long provided a rationalisation for this state and demands that the practice of psychoanalysis should embrace the struggle for social change. Many women's symptoms are, he says, "an ineffectual reaction against their distorted and oppressive sexual-social existence . . . social change, and involvement in struggle for social change, may be a most meaningful therapeutic experience and goal and, therefore, must be a real part of our professional concern."

The book is tantalising: there is a decisive intervention on behalf of culture as an important psychological determinant, but no explicit statement by any of the authors of the need for a fundamental restructuring of the present order of society if women are ever to achieve the sort of equality which is said to be a prerequisite for

psychological emancipation. Equality is not just about joining the labour force (Judd Marmor) – women have discovered the short-sightedness of Engel's vision that entering the forces of production would free them; on the contrary, it has brought about double enslavement. A critique of the treatment of women cannot be separated from a critique of the capitalist system which produces that treatment. As long as the wider oppressive and repressive structures remain in a male dominated society, it is almost tautologous to say that "the basic nature of women is still unknown". Rather, as Sulzman says, "The understanding of the psychology of the female has only just begun."

But the book is successful in demonstrating the fact that inside psychoanalysis itself it is acknowledged that the narrow orthodox tradition has been distorted or mistaken in significant ways. Beyond that the critique rightly leaves most of the theory and methodology of psychoanalysis intact. But it fails to go on to show *how* psychoanalysis could be used as a force towards social struggle and change by providing an understanding of women's oppression at its deepest level – our anxieties, insecurities, self-depreciation. Marxism can provide the forms for an analysis of alienation and oppression, but the intimate content is the special domain of a radicalised psychoanalysis.

A synthesis is required, and for that to be possible psychoanalysis must change its own self-conception from one of being governed by its own internal laws to one of being governed by the 'laws' of society as a whole. In a book called *Marx, Freud and the Critique of Everyday Life*, Bruce Brown shows how what he calls Freudo-Marxism can provide a general framework for integrating an analysis of the structures of capitalism and of the structures of the psyche – that is, a simultaneous examination of repression and rationalisation in the psychic realm with oppression and ideology in the social. The family produces in individuals the psychic structure necessary for perpetuating the class system.

Psychoanalysis and Women may enable women to step forward from the negativism (albeit right and necessary in the short run) of attacks on aspects of Freudian psychology, and see how psychoanalysis can act as a force for struggle and liberation.

I have discussed this book at much greater length than either *Psychology of Women* (Bardwick) or *Knowing Woman* (de Castillejo) partly because it is a much better book, but also, and more importantly, because an understanding of the implications of a psychoanalytic approach can provide a critique for the biological reductionism of the one (Bardwick) and for the idealist determinism of the other. Both are profoundly react-

ionary. In the case of the first, the constant reference to surveys, statistics and reports, together with a wide range of technical language, are good examples of the insidiousness of a particular kind of writing. It gives a pseudo-respectability to quite outrageous views which can be made to seem plausible (susceptible as we are to the language of expertise) because they are said to be based on 'scientific' research. What are in fact moral, social and political areas are discussed under the guise of science. This 'scientism' combines with a total lack of acknowledged political perspective to produce an analysis which I find both misleading and undermining. "In the reality of current socialisation and expectations I regard women who are not motivated to achieve the affiliative role with husband and children as not normal. The psychological needs that evolve from the body, the internalisation of cultural expectation as part of the self-concept, and the pressure from parents and peers all converge to make marriage and children, love and nurturance, the most important of feminine psychological needs. When these needs are absent, denied or defended against, my clinical observation is that there is evidence for pathological levels of anxiety, a distorted sex identity, and a neurotic solution."

The implications of this are that in so far as a woman deviates from a 'feminine' norm (which turns out to be based largely on research done on American college students) she moves away from her basic nature and is therefore doomed to neurosis. Any concept of 'normal' used in this way is potentially both threatening and destructive: we are bound to become anxious if we allow, for example, our degree of 'maternity' to be measured by the duration of our menstrual periods – as Bardwick at one point suggests as a relevant criterion. She preaches a counsel of despair in that her lengthy and often incisive analysis (the more insidious because the descriptions of women's feelings and experiences are so recognisable) finally suggests little more than that the *status quo* is the inevitable lot of woman because of her chemistry in relation to her position in society. She roots her analysis in the very notions of 'femininity' which, by her own account, are so often the sources of feelings of insecurity, inadequacy and unhappiness. To struggle against our socialisation may approximate to a pathological condition, the likelihood of which is, moreover, supported by 'clinical observation'. To do anything but defer or acquiesce to the norms of our situation may also mean the surrender of our 'femininity' – as if that itself were some value-free, 'objective' concept!

She seems unaware of the class assumptions lying behind her analysis, and fails to examine either the division of labour in a sexist, hierarchical society, or how that is rooted in relations between men

and women. She describes many women as they unquestionably are, in such a way as to imply that that is how they want to/ought to/will, inevitably be. She is right that often "one's esteem depends not on the human qualities which one possesses but on success in the competitive market-place." Yet there is no critique of this 'market-place'. Despite lip-service to it, there is in fact no sense of interaction between the individual and the political system in which she lives – little sense that the so-called 'feminine' may be less a matter of choice, or of 'nature', than the only way that a woman is able to acquire any value (albeit someone else's).

The sub-title of the book points to one of its main tasks – "A Study of Bio-Cultural Conflicts". If we are going to understand women "we ought to be investigating the effects of menstruation, the secondary sex characteristics, pregnancy, lactation, parturition and menopause." This is a very important and underworked side of female psychology. Unfortunately in this book, although Bardwick raises and explores some very serious and interesting questions and even repeatedly emphasises tentativeness and caution in drawing conclusions in the exceedingly complex area she is discussing, yet the documentation carries its own mystifying weight. She surrounds her theses with such an aura of 'scientific' and sociological data that laywomen, like myself, find themselves going to their nearest friend and 'expert' to tell them whether the 'facts' are 'true' or not. My own doubts were confirmed, in this case by Anne Cooke (PhD Biochemistry), that Bardwick tends to use 'scientific' evidence selectively to suit her case – that is, having mentioned many possible variables, she then proceeds to argue on the basis of some but not others. For example, so anxious is she to make her case about the chemical effects of bodily functions on the psyche that she undervalues the equally important area of the effect of psychological experiences on e.g., hormone balances, etc., indeed how external factors can affect the whole cycle – anorexia and secondary amenorrhoea being obvious examples of such a process.

I was left with the feeling that the enormous accumulation of data – which could be employed to prove a number of quite different points – actually removed the obligation to be personally committed to any one view, except, that is, to an 'apolitical' (and therefore in this case conservative) survey of highly recognisable tendencies and experiences in women's development and an attempt to root that in biology. Take, for instance, the following: "The contribution to feminine passivity from cultural moulding is obvious; there have also been suggestions that there is a constitutional contribution. The fact that only one-third of females are likely to be mesomorphs, the lower activity rate in infancy, the

early low levels of testosterone, the female's preoccupation with internal and closed space, her early sensitivity to people, will all tend to make the girl less active and less aggressive." Her array of data to support this statement blinds her to the fact that each part is itself a biological expression of a social and cultural norm rather than biologically determining. I feel that she is herself duped by her own method, trapped by her own socialisation, and relentlessly 'feminine'.

It seems to me that there is very little to choose between the biological mystifications of this book, and the idealist mystifications of *Knowing Woman*, only in the case of the latter, authority is drawn not from science but from a quasi-mystical sense of 'being'. This sense is based on the importance of, as it were, getting in touch with the deepest roots, or rather strands, of the self through the 'collective unconscious'. Herein lies a means of access to what is essentially 'masculine' and 'feminine' – concepts quite as insidious as those posited by Bardwick.

Irene Claremont de Castillejo has written a strange book, and I do not pretend fully to understand it. We find very matter-of-fact views on women's right to decide whether or not she has an abortion. In the context of an exploration of female psychology based on Jungian concepts of the collective, rather than the personally idiosyncratic or the socially determined. She tries to distinguish between the feminine and the masculine ways of functioning within the same person – the 'animus' or masculine in woman, and the 'anima' or feminine in man. Her descriptions, like Bardwick's, are often evocative and tend to invite a kind of identification which is in danger of inhibiting further analysis. For once the nature of these areas of unconscious activity have been located, it is as little open to alternative explanations as the biological model. The irreducibility and absurdity of the position is clear in the following passage: "A woman today lives in perpetual conflict . . . She cannot slay the dragon of the unconscious without severing her own essential contact with it; without in fact destroying her feminine strength and becoming a mere pseudo-man . . . She needs the focussed consciousness her animus alone can give her, yet she must not forsake her woman's role of mediator to man. Through man, woman finds the animus who can *express* the soul she has never lost. Her burning need is to trust her own diffuse awareness, to *know* what she knows and to learn to speak of it, for until it is expressed she does not wholly know it."

The substance of one's 'being' is treated as almost entirely internal and self-referential, only incidentally related to the issues of the outside world. One of women's main problems seems to derive from

an imbalance between the relative emphases of the 'masculine' and 'feminine' in any single individual. This approach precludes a critique of those very concepts and the predicament of women is reduced to the idea that "this feminine soul image of a woman is still in great distress because it has remained in the unconscious and it desperately needs to be brought into consciousness."

The importance of the psychoanalytic approach should now be clearer: both as posing an alternative to, and as providing a critique of, alternative approaches, among them the biologicistic and the idealist. Each of these carries with it a powerful appeal based, in the case of Bardwick, on the authority of science, and with de Castillejo, on the elusive plausibility drawn from identification and suggestibility. Neither allows for much change in the situation they describe and both are determinist in that they are defined by their own terms of reference, based in one instance on unexamined, and in the other, unexaminable data.

Psychoanalysis as it is, has, as Brown says, become a mere ideology of the existing society "mystifying its oppressive nature and contributing to its reproduction." But as feminists we must go beyond the elitist and highly technical language in which much of it is couched, and complement readings of Marx with more powerful weapons and insights — drawn from a close analysis of the intimacies of our own experience — to struggle for a society which is neither hierarchical nor sexist. In that it can provide a critique of the deepest formative processes of the individual in the context of day to day familial existence, psychoanalysis is essential to the feminist struggle. The integration of its insights and methods into a wider political strategy is a necessity if we are to overcome the prevailing dichotomy between the personal and the political. □

Margot Waddell

Bruce Brown, *Marx, Freud and the Critique of Everyday Life. Toward a Permanent Cultural Revolution*. Monthly Review Press (paperback), £1.25.

Eli Zavetsky, "Capitalism, The Family and Personal Life". Dimension Pamphlet, \$1.20; "Male Supremacy and the Unconscious". *Socialist Revolution* No.21/22. Jan 1975.

Our Bodies Ourselves. By the Boston Women's Health Book Collective. £1.50.

Getting Clear. Wildwood House, £1.95.

All the above books are available from Compendium, 240 Camden High Street, London NW1.



Illustration by Brian Froud

Kid's Books

Ultra-Violet Catastrophe
Margaret Mahy
Illustrated by Brian Froud
(Dent £2.50)

The above illustration is from a new picture book, *Ultra-Violet Catastrophe*, by the prolific Margaret Mahy of *The Man Whose Mother Was a Pirate* fame. Great-Uncle Magnus and Sally (alias Horrible Stumper the tree pirate) enjoy an action packed afternoon in the country, crawling through hedges, paddling in mud, climbing trees and building a dam. Once again Margaret Mahy writes warmly about a positive girl and about adult-child relationships from a knowledge and love of children that rise above sex-stereotypes. □

FILM



Photograph by Columbia Pictures Corporation

LES FEMMES, LEURS PEINTURES ET LA FAVEUR DES DIEUX



Mithila – Women's Paintings from India exhibited in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Louvre.

When I walked into this exhibition I felt as if I stood astride a huge contradiction. One part of me was filled with delight – what design, what richness, what glorious colours, scarlets and blues to thrill you from the frontal lobes to the base of the spine . . . and all women's work, what's more. My visual perceptions, trained in Art College, (State subsidised, you could say) responded and were thankful for the feast. But another part of me was filled with rage. "Damn this looting of the Third World," it said. "Damn all this cultural imperialism."

For some 3,000 years before a roving aesthete brought their work to Paris, the women of Mathila – an area between the lower Ganges and the foothills of the Himalayas – have been turning out paintings. They paint on the occasion of births, marriages, feasts, holidays. Their subjects are often, but not always, religious – besides the Gods there are plenty of fertility symbols and celebrations of food-stuffs. Slides showed the women at work, squatting round big sheets of paper, some drawing out the designs, others colouring in. Old

women were teaching young girls the techniques. There seemed to be a continuous and large production of these paintings, and little thought given to preserving them. Many were done on brown wrapping paper, which gave them a domestic, everyday look – a far cry from the imperious and indestructible works in marble and bronze which crowd the world's museums.

The inadequate and irritating commentary neglected to give any background details which might have explained, for instance, why only the women, and not the men, paint, and what this means to their status in the social organisation. Instead of explanations it relied on a few grandiose statements about the Universality of Art.

Transplanting a tradition in this way into the museums of our consumer society can only mean one thing – the visual riches of another culture being selectively plundered and turned into yet more status commodities for the prosperous classes of the West. The commodity 'Beauty' can be sampled first in museums, and bought a little later at Heals, in the form of wallcoverings, perhaps, or at Biba's in the form of caftans. As long as consumer capitalism lasts no artefact on a gallery wall can remain aloof from this kind of contradiction. □

Alison Fell

the quota system and black shiny handbags

A close look at discrimination in specific fields of music is frequently the basis for discussions, articles or interviews in this music section (see *Spare Rib* issues 19/24/34). A conference held recently by *Musician* (the journal of the Musicians' Union) uncovered areas of common oppression among women from *all* fields of music.

Those taking part:

Dian Booth: violin, freelance, London Studio Players.

Michele Cooper: saxophone/flute, freelance dance/pop/jazz, Mecca.

Jinny Fisher: violin, freelance, orchestral.

Nikki Francis: flute, jazz/folk.

Liz Hambleton: violin, freelance, chamber, opera and teaching.

Laka Koc: keyboards, rock, currently Witches Brew.

Ann Odell: keyboards, arranger, singer. Formerly Blue Mink, currently Chopyn.

Terri Quayle: congas, percussion, teaching. Currently Amalgam, free jazz.

Dian, Jinny and Liz are on the Women's Sub-Committee of the Musician's Union Central London Branch.

By Marion Fudger

Jinny

We (the Women's Sub-Committee of the Musicians' Union, Central London Branch) were aware that there were only a few areas in which we could actually do anything — the four London orchestras for example, though we realise that's a very small portion of what we should be doing. But we're trying to tackle things one by one. Only a few of us are sufficiently interested to beaver away at it, and we just don't have the time to do it alone. Sessions are really one of the next things to get cracking on. That's one of the areas where the Union has power because they have a list of contractors. We'll have to discuss whether we approve of the quota system and if we do, start taking steps to implement it. To be able to say, "unless you have your quota of women on these sessions, then you can't fix."

Terri

It's going to be difficult because the session field is a closed circuit. Those people are men and they fix men. I was booked for one particular session and the producer came up and said "I'll tell you what I want you to play. (He demonstrated.) Now, have you got that?" So I said "Yes all right." He went away and I thought "Well, I'm not taking any notice of *that*!" So the session proceeded and I played as I thought would fit the piece — I played completely differently.

At the end of it, he came up and said "That was very good, I'm glad you did what I told you to." It's strange but in that position he wouldn't have said it to a man.

Dian

No, but problems involved in sessions are common to the whole of the freelance field aren't they? We have this problem in the straight freelance field as well, but you have it to a greater extent in the session world because there is definitely more discrimination there.

Michele

Yes, much more. You see, the trouble with a quota system, as far as I'm concerned, is that it wouldn't work. You would always get resentment from people who'd say "Right, well we've got five women, that's our quota." I really do feel that people would resent the fact that they'd have to have a certain number of women. You're not changing anybody's attitude that way. Of course I don't know how you would do that anyway.

Dian

Maybe you can change their attitude . . . I'm not sure. I recognise that it's not free choice — ideally what we would like is to be asked to do work because we're good at our jobs. The quota system is forcing people to do something they don't want to

do. But one of these days, they're going to actually listen to the results of a session or recording that's made up of a certain number of women and men. They are going to say "Yes, that's good" or maybe "We've got something different, women have added an extra quality."

Ann

I think as far as the string section is concerned, the quota system would work. The point is, it plays as a section, you're not going to single anybody out to play a fantastic solo or anything. But where the quota system would fall down would be on rhythm sections. I don't know many women drummers, bass players or percussionists.

Terri

I think we're talking about two different things. In the classical world, there are always women musicians: violinists, cellists, pianists. There may be relatively few, but in the jazz/rock/pop world it's far more difficult because they are immediately expected to be the singer — the one that puts the glamour on the stage. There are far less women musicians in this field.

Jinny

Nikki was saying earlier that the way to be well known is to have lots of experience and so improve and become respected. But if you don't get the work, you don't get

photos courtesy of 'Musician'

the experience — it's a vicious circle. So unless there is some way of insuring that women will get work at the beginning . . .

Liz
Here we come back to the quota system, but I don't feel that's the right way to go about it. The only way which will cut at the root of the whole thing is first of all, the legislation which comes in this year, and secondly some sort of procedure within the Union whereby complaints can be dealt with before they go to law or to the courts.

Jinny
Yes, but how many aspiring female musicians give it up at a very early stage because they know there isn't the work and they just don't see other women musicians around them.

Dian
I think it's to do with women's sexual role and the way we are seeing the change in the sexual role. We traditionally see our-



Ann Odell

selves as needing the approval of men in order to survive emotionally because we've always been in a secondary situation. The best way to get approval from men is to say "Yes, you're the best and I don't want to compete with you." Now in the classical field, it's become a little easier to go and sit in a big string section, because there are quite a lot of us.

But the jazz or rock musician has got to play a solo more often and this is competing with the man on his prime sexual ground. I think it's taken a lot of courage for women to get up and say "I can improvise" which has traditionally been seen as a brilliant male thing to do.

Terri
In front of the classical orchestra you have a man conducting, so in actual fact it's still a submissive role that the women are playing in that orchestra because it's controlled by a man — right? Now in the rock or jazz world, if a woman has the

effrontery to go on that stage and play, it's as an equal. This is where we get down to the very little word called 'ego' but it means a lot. You become a threat. If you're not under the control of someone, then you might be better than the person who's next to you.

Laka
Look at the publicity thing. I remember when *Fanny* came over and there was this great big thing about women's rock bands. The whole P.R. thing they got was "Even though they're women — they can play." I went to see them, thinking these women must be trying really hard to get rid of all this shit from the P.R. But they were wearing all this glitter, I was so upset, it was a let down; this horrid little man rushing around telling them to look all sexy. It was really sickening.

Michele
The trouble is that the ideal standard is, if you're good you've got to play like a man. Women have to play with *balls* or they're no good.

Terri
It's the insecure musicians that really give you hell. I have a claim going through the Musicians' Union for some gigs that I wasn't paid for. The fixer was in fact the pianist, so he was getting a rake-off on both sides. One night I walked in, after doing work with him for three years, on and off, did the whole evening and at the end of it, I moved his ashtray, the smoke was going in my eyes. He fired me on the spot and threw a box of cigarettes at me. If I'd been a man, I could have got up and punched him right in the mouth. This is the whole threat thing again. I'm absolutely sure that this man had had a bad day, somebody had shaken him but because of being insecure, he couldn't get back at that person. So the best way to get back — is at the woman who comes in, knows her instrument and is not going to say "Please help me. I don't know what key this is and I haven't got my right music." But someone who walks in, knows what they're doing and says "Right, I'm going to play this" and counts in the tempo. They say "I don't need her tonight . . ."

Dian
We've agreed that this is a problem of threat and that the question is how to cope with it. We've discussed the quota system which is a way of forcing people to accept something which sexually and psychologically they don't want to accept. Has anyone any better ideas?

Ann
Well, there's only one way and that's for women musicians to stick together and have some sort of solidarity; try to give each other a bit of confidence. Unfortunately, at the moment, the quota system is probably the only answer. They had to do it in America to get work for black actors in films and TV — same thing really.

Terri
I agree with that because you're actually



Terri Quaye

forcing more women to be exposed. But then we come to another thing and that is the mode of dress. You get a woman musician who is as good as anyone else, now how does she dress?

Nikki
I've noticed something quite fantastic. A few weeks ago we did this really terrible gig, it was awful and I felt bad. The pianist in the band said one day "Why don't you wear one of those short skirts like you used to wear?" So I thought I'd just try the feminine charm bit and I turned up in a short skirt and white boots — it was a fantastic gig, they all played brilliantly. Now I go back to wearing trousers in a rota — three weeks I wear trousers and once a month I wear a skirt.

Jinny
When I started, I was very aware of the clothes I wore — that they were not the clothes that a female classical musician

Nikki Francis



wore. I really felt I had to go out to Marks and Spencers to buy myself a nice skirt and a black shiny handbag, which is the essential thing to have on the platform. If you haven't got a black shiny handbag, you're absolutely nowhere. I deliberately cultivated a confident air that I didn't feel because you have to appear doubly confident, being a woman. Very much so . . . if you didn't walk into the rehearsal with a new band with some sort of presence and confidence, you would get shoved to the back of the seconds and you'd never be heard of again. As far as being in a large section is concerned in terms of promotion in the freelance world, where you are actually sat depends on what sex you are.

Dian

There's a tremendous expectation of what sort of role you will play, the pressure is so great. I have spent a lot of time trying to find out what I want and what I feel. But when I walk into an orchestra and find I'm the only woman, the pressure is tremendous to be the typical woman. "How nice, you've got your hair down tonight dear." I had a fight with a chap who came up to me a few weeks ago because I had a dress on instead of trousers and said "Ooh, you look so do-able." This was his ultimate compliment!

I like to dress because I feel the way I do that day. I don't want to dress to try and seduce the guys into giving me work.



Jinny Fisher

If you feel like wearing a skirt because that's what you feel like — then that's what you ought to wear, but if you're only putting skirts on to get whistles, then I think that's the wrong reason to do it.

Liz

I think the conflict is fundamentally between the woman who dresses to be a

sex object and the woman who dresses to suit herself because she feels good.

Michele

But you're told from the time you're so high that you've got to be attractive. You are supposed to be attractive to men, that's what being a woman is all about. Then you do something like play music and you think "Oh I don't want to look too good because then I won't know whether they like the way I play or the way I look." You find yourself deliberately underplaying your sexuality. You're never sure.

Terri

There's also the question of economics. If you have the opportunity to get a job playing music, then you conform to this preconceived idea. If you don't, you're out of a job. From the point of view of club owners, it's "You've got a band, right, how many people in the band — six people — have you got a woman in the band? — Yeah . . . now look, make her look sexy, there's a good draw." Straight away.

Liz

I think there would be many more women who would be as confident as Terri in this kind of a situation, if there were more discussion groups around. That's what Women's Liberation groups are all about. There should be more women in music involved in Women's Liberation.

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Jinny

I'm sure that this is the way. The other week we were saying "Well why don't women stand for the orchestra board?" Well the answer is they don't have the confidence, they don't back each other up. In the orchestra, they feel competitive, they have no sense of solidarity. So there's isolation, lack of confidence and competition as well.

Liz

But there are various barriers to overcome. First the fear of losing employment through making yourself conspicuous. Then women will begin to talk about themselves and their situations, within that orchestra. But for a lot of women, there's still a further barrier, which separates themselves as women in an orchestra and themselves as women outside the orchestra, in relation to feminism. I find from my own experience in orchestras, that there are very few women who have thought about the feminist issues.

Jinny

I find it quite extraordinary how people will accept the status quo in orchestras, in a way that they certainly wouldn't accept outside. For instance, a very small thing. You go on a date — if there are two band-rooms and one's up three flights of stairs — it's always the women's. And the way we're always sat on the inside, lined up neatly, we wouldn't accept being pushed



Dian Booth and Liz Hambleton.

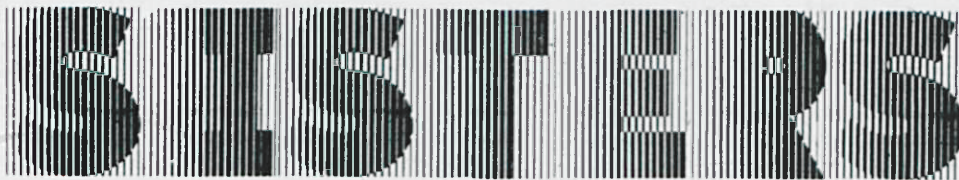
around like that outside the orchestra. But they don't even think about it, they're so glad to get the work at all.

Ann

If all the women in the music business, like us, actually communicated with each other and stuck together . . . I mean this is the first time I've ever sat down and had

a good rap with people that are in orchestras for a start. That for me is a very important thing. There's a gap to be bridged even between the rock business and the classical business. We've really got to stick together. □

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National Office, 29 Catherine Place, London
SW1 for membership forms or information on
the address of your nearest branch, etc.



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